THE OLD MEN OF THE SEA

Compton Mackenzie

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THE OLD MEN OF THE SEA

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A ROMANCE OF ADVENTURE IN THE SOUTH PACIFIC

BY

COMPTON MACKENZIE

Author of "Carnival," "Sinister Street," "The Seven Ages of Woman," etc.

NEW YORK
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To
JOHN HOPE-JOHNSTONE, ESQUIRE

My dear H. J.,

Walking together once in the olive-groves of Mitylene, or was it in Cos beneath the great plane-tree of Hippocrates, we decided that all travellers were liars. You, who have met Marsham and know how much of his story is strictly true, will be the first to overlook the additions that reveal the practised traveller.

Yours ever,

Compton Mackenzie.

Isle of Herm.

Lady Day,
1923.

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CHAPTER I

ROMANTIC INCLINATIONS

I HAD taken refuge in my club from a cold and gusty evening in early June of the year 19—. I was intending to remain there until it closed, when a man whom I particularly disliked and who was disliked by every one of his fellow members arrived just before dinner and spoilt my plans. A fundamental weakness of my character is not only an inability to be rude to club bores, but actually out of a kind of cowardly pitifulness an inability to refrain from going out of my way to be pleasant to them. I knew that I should either have to spend a resentful evening with X—— or from the middle of a clubable group make myself wretched with fancying his mortification when left to himself in a corner. I firmly believe, in the cooler moments of academic detachment, that people like X—— are pachydermatous and that their skins can only be pierced by the explosive bullets of such insults as one would most improbably hear in any decent club. I prefer to believe that the lobster does not object to being boiled alive. At the same time, I cannot myself try to wound these pachyderms with even so much as a pin; and I would neither boil a lobster nor see it boiled.

"Hullo, Marsham! Are you dining here to-night?"

"No, I was just going out."

"You're not often to be seen here nowadays, Marsham. Did you read what . . ."

"Yes. Very good, wasn't it? I read it right through." It was at this point that I ought to have had the courage to turn away; if I had, perhaps I might have excaped X—— forever; but of course my miserable weakness asserted itself, and I had to add: "I should like to talk the whole subject over with you some evening."

X—— brightened.

"Would you really? Well, why not dine with me to-morrow?"

"Not to-morrow."

"The day after?"

"I can't manage anything this week."

"Well, any day you like, my dear fellow. We won't dine here. One never can get away from other people in this club. Why not dine with me next Monday at the Junior Universities?"

"I think Monday will suit me," I said cautiously. "But if it won't, I'll be sure to let you know in good time."

I tried to put into this assurance such a benevolent intention of courtesy as would compensate X—— for any snubs he might have to endure in the meanwhile. I hoped that I had successfully wreathed the possibility of an earlier engagement with the aureole of so much romantic hopefulness of the contrary that, if in the end I did not come to dinner, as I was perfectly sure in my mind I should not be able to come, X—— would feel more for my disappointment than for his own. With this I put between us the swinging doors of the Z—— club.

The prospect of Piccadilly was gloomy. The rain, which had been contending all day with the wind, had won a victory over the dying gale, and now seethed on the road and on the pavements. Westward over Hyde

Park the gray flabby sky was faintly bruised by the sunset; and a file of policemen coming on duty for the night in their shiny mackintosh capes and trousers moved like great chub through the approaching twilight. The drivers of the various vehicles increased their speed as if thus they might avoid the rain, splashing me continuously because I would walk by the curb and peer with futile optimism at the drooping flags of the many taxis traveling eastward. I was beginning to wonder if it would not have been wiser to endure an evening of X—— rather than go walking in this downpour toward a restaurant, the identity of which I had not yet decided.

At this moment I found myself upon the commodious stretch of pavement that runs along the walls of Devonshire House, a spot speaking to me so intimately of London that not even this sodden dusk was able to spoil its associations. Lately they have taken to posting advertisements upon those sedate and grimy walls, so that the passers-by are distracted from their observation of each other, and not one of them pays any sharper heed to the spectacle of humanity than he would pay in the serpentine gullets of the Tube through which he hurries prior to being digested in the bowels of progress and—but the metaphor need not be pursued.

On this June evening there were no advertisements, and involuntarily I began to dawdle and involuntarily I observed everyone I encountered. I even bothered to turn my head and look back at one or two, as for many years I had been wont to look back at one or two whenever I found myself upon this leisurely pavement; I can remember turning round to stare at the pneumatic tires of a bicycle from here, yes, and even at a young man in a Homburg hat. It is always here that I have met people whose existence was become incredible by never seeing them for years, here and outside

Swan & Edgar's both on the Piccadilly side and in Regent Street. I have sometimes thought that I should like to be a beggar outside Devonshire House. It has seemed to me that there I might spend the rest of time in beholding a panorama of my life's acquaintance. I should not, of course, embarrass them by salutations, but I should be assured that they were not phantoms of my memory, those divergent friends; and while apparently I was selling matches or bootlaces, actually I should be illuminating the cupboards and corners of the past with my vistas and tempting with my laces footprints I had fancied obliterated long since and forever.

As I reached the curb of Berkeley Street and was wondering if I should dine in the Berkeley Grill, the policeman on point duty released the tributary of crosswise traffic into Piccadilly and held up the main stream. I was greatly struck by the delicacy of that policeman's uplifted hand, and while I was waiting I looked back at the western sky and thought how perfectly it now resembled a worn and shapeless slipper of gray felt through which, like an old woman's toes, protruded a few flesh-colored clouds that still held the reflection of the sunset. I remember that I thought how much more beautiful was the uplifted hand of that policeman than anything else in sight. The hands of policemen on point duty are not usually objects of beauty. They are apt to have less distinction than odd bits of meat sold cheaply on a Saturday midnight. The hand of this policeman, curiously fine and white, long-fingered, mobile and sensitive, might have belonged to a musician. He was conducting a symphony; he was not regulating traffic. With what grace he brought in those three taxicabs, really as unobtrusively as three clarionets. Yet his conducting went beyond any comparison with orchestral effects. While I stood there in the rain and watched him from the curbstone, I felt that he was

dispatching every vehicle upon a romantic quest, and when at last he released the pent-up main stream and gave no more than a forefinger to restrain the cross-wise traffic from Berkeley Street, while with his other hand he sped all us pedestrians upon our way, I felt that I too was being urged into the unknown, that all this wet and throbbing London dusk was merely the illusion of life, and that presently I should perceive and grasp reality.

It was at this moment that I met Godfrey Biscoe, whom I had not seen for about ten years and whom I had last met most unaccountably in my tailor's where he was choosing himself a suit of so florid a pattern that I was, I remember, quite taken aback, as if I had surprised a shameful secret. At Cambridge he never wore anything but a cloth that was of exactly the same hue of rusty black as his gown.

I always pictured Biscoe's gown as part of his physical exterior, and could have as little imagined him out of it as I could have imagined my old headmaster in a Turkish bath. I reproached Mr. Hunt when Biscoe was gone out of the shop, spoke to him, in fact, as severely as if he had been playing the pander to a curate. He justified his behavior and assured me that Biscoe was in the habit of choosing what he called "very unique patterns."

"But does he ever wear them?" I asked. "He certainly wasn't noticeably attired just now."

"I never see him wear them," Mr. Hunt admitted. "But he does wear them, for we've had them sent back to us for pressing, cleaning, relining, and general repairs. And he gives them hard wear, sir. He does, sir; upon my word, sir. Hibben!"

Hibben was Mr. Hunt's assistant, a plaster cast of Mr. Hunt's richer marble.

"Hibben!"

"Yes, Mr. Hunt?"

"Hibben, how many times has Mr. Biscoe sent us that green Harris for renovation?"

"The very green Harris, Mr. Hunt?"

"Don't be a donkey, Hibben. The very green, of course."

"It can hardly be less than four times, Mr. Hunt."

"That's what I was telling Mr. Marsham, Hibben. I said: 'Mr. Biscoe *must* wear his suits! There's not a doubt about it,' I told Mr. Marsham. We've done too much renovation, have we not, Hibben?"

"We have indeed, Mr. Hunt."

I could have let Hunt and Hibben go on like this for half an hour. The pair of them responded to each other like the simplest kind of melody, Hibben always with repetition, Hunt with repartee, so that in the end a complete sonata was achieved, a sonata, too, which had the depths in it of twenty years as master and man together, and I should say twenty years of friendship, too.

"But when does he wear them?" I interrupted.

"Ah, now, sir, there you've asked me something. Mr. Marsham has asked me something, has he not, Hibben?"

Hibben looked idiotically grave, made an angle of his first and second fingers, inserted his chin, looked more idiotic and more grave, and finally replied.

"Mr. Marsham certainly *has* asked you something, Mr. Hunt."

"Yes, sir, as Hibben says (and though Hibben's a bit of a donkey sometimes, he is right this time), you certainly have, sir. You have, sir, upon my word, sir, you have. You don't think he goes fishing in Norway?"

I could not fancy Biscoe fishing in the river Lea; as for Norway, the idea was preposterous. And I never found out why Biscoe invested in such dazzling tweeds nor in what part of the world he had the courage to be seen in them, nor how they returned in such

a state to Hunt. In fact I had scarcely thought of Biscoe in all this decade, and it was strange that even while I was shaking his hand there should flash through my memory that scene of speculation all that time ago in Hunt's front shop with its dusty yellow sunlight and rolls of cloths. Biscoe was not in tweeds to-night, or if he was they were covered by the very waterproof I should have expected to see on his rusty Cambridge black, one of those waterproofs that imitate the texture and color of a poultry yard in wet weather, one of those waterproofs that its wearer is apt to button gothically from the top so that it hangs in an isosceles triangle. That was how Biscoe was wearing his to-night, as he stood shaking my hand and blinking at me through rain-bleared spectacles outside the Berkeley Hotel.

Even if one has not seen an old friend for ten years, it seems an exaggerated curiosity to stand in a drench of rain and ask him what he has been doing with himself all this time. But that is what I did.

"Oh! geologizing and botanizing about the place," said Biscoe.

And it flashed upon me that this was how he wore out his suits.

"But, of course," he was adding, "I have to spend most of my time in the Museum. And you, Marsham, what are you doing?"

"At the moment I am looking for a place to dine."

"Are you really?" he asked eagerly. "I know a splendid little place."

"In Greek Street," I cut in.

"How did you guess?"

"All those wonderful little places which nobody ever knows except your host and where nobody ever comes except all sorts of rather interesting people and where you can get the best cooked conger eel and the best bottle of red vinegar in London are in Greek Street,

my dear Biscoe. Old Compton Street, Gerrard Street, Wardour Street, they have all been discovered and exploited, but Greek Street remains to the ordinary diner-out as mysterious as the smile of Mona Lisa."

"Well, this place does happen to be in Greek Street, and I should be delighted to take you there."

"It's too wet for a third-rate dinner. Dine with me instead at—" I hesitated. Somehow I felt that Biscoe would cork the wine at the Berkeley, and I substituted Hatchett's, where I am bound to say, we had a much better dinner than I expected, and three really excellent bottles of Burgundy. I made a note of the vintage at the time, but in the greater excitements these three bottles begot I mislaid it. However, as I have not succeeded in discovering one decent bottle of any wine except Champagne at any restaurant in London since the war, my note would probably not have served you.

It was good Burgundy.
It really was.
It was.

It wasn't a Pommard and it wasn't a Beaune. It was neither Chambertin nor Volnay nor La Tâche. It wasn't Richebourg nor Clos-Vougeot nor Grands-Echezeaux. It was not Musigny. Was it a Romanée Conti? Was it? I think it must have been, and yet—no, no, it was a Romanée St. Vivant. I remember now. A Romanée St. Vivant.

Burgundy is essentially a wine for men of action. Its fumes really do have to be worked off, and it is just this difficulty of finding any suitably heroic expression of its virtues which latterly has brought it into disfavor. If Biscoe and I had drunk Champagne that night, I doubt if I should now be giving you this tale. Champagne is really not a masculine wine. It gives a woman amorous resolution and encourages adolescents to invent new dance steps. It stimulates after-dinner

speakers to imagine that they have wit and persuades their listeners to an imbecile charity. It is as superficial beside Burgundy as a topaz beside a ruby. I would not utter the lightest blasphemy against Claret; but I fancy that from three bottles of Claret not much would have resulted. As for other wines, I will not insult you by supposing that Hock, which is a wine for consequential and pragmatical dons, or Sauterne from which God save us both, or . . . no, no, leave these honey-colored and sentimental products, and come back to the contemplation of our Romanée St. Vivant.

The first bottle did not reveal Biscoe's mental growth during these ten years. I felt, as we lolled upon its flavor, like one who having taken a companion on a yachting cruise is doubtful of his capacity to sustain his part upon the ocean. This is perhaps how I should distinguish between Claret and Burgundy. Claret has the quality of the Mediterranean. We sail through an extremely beautiful present into a perfectly vivid past. We meditate. We dress up. We dream. Burgundy is oceanic. If we cruise on Burgundy, our dreams will probably have a practical result like those of Columbus.

"And in the study of geology and botany you have been tolerably happy?" I asked.

"Yes, though of course I haven't done nearly all I hoped to do. I've never been what I should call far afield."

I nodded encouragement. One had to do that with Biscoe, for like so many short-sighted people he was easily flustered. I have noticed that many myopics go through life in the manner of people walking over slippery rocks at low tide. They must be encouraged with beautiful prospects round the corner to prevent their worrying about sprained ankles. Moral or intellectual plunging must be made to seem worth while.

"You've plenty of time to go farther afield," I suggested. "And you're not married."

Biscoe put a finger and thumb in his waistcoat pocket, and I thought for one horrible instant that he was going to pull out and show me the photograph of some young woman to whom he was engaged. Perhaps it was really fright which made me call abruptly to the waiter to bring another bottle of Burgundy.

"You're game?" I asked. "You'll drink fair?"

"Oh, rather!" he vowed. "Burgundy is my wine, you know."

"You were saying that you hadn't been what you would call far afield?"

I was curious to know what Biscoe did call far afield. I vaguely imagined the Dolomites or, as the utmost stretch of his ambition, the Urals.

"Well, there are one or two islands I'd like to survey before I die."

His fingers went back to fidgeting with his waistcoat pocket, and I looked round to see if the second bottle was in sight.

"I've thought a good deal about islands," I told him, floating out upon a wine-dark sea.

"Easter Island for one," said Biscoe. "And Rapa even more. Those forts, you know, at the head of each ravine. And the Carolines! Pan-Katara, the haunted island in the lagoon of Metalanim, and the ruins of Nan-Mata, that Cyclopean Venice among the mangroves of eastern Ponapé. Oh, yes, and to see the green oranges of Anno Bom and the green pigeons of Fernando Po. I should like to explore the Galapagos and speculate in Trinidad (the South Atlantic Trinidad, I mean) upon the way the forest trees died there. Geologically it must be great, and," he added, sipping his wine gloatingly, "it's full of saffron-yellow land crabs. I should like to stand beneath the trilithon of Tongatabu and sail by Ball's Pyramid and gather the seeds of the Kentia palms on Lord Howe Island, and in Ceylon drink deep from the Traveler's Tree."

"Drink deep from your Burgundy instead," I urged, for I perceived that Biscoe was likely to become royally drunk. I wanted more of him. I began to understand now why he lusted after polychromatic tweeds.

"Where else would you go?"

"I should like to gallop over the turf of the Chatham Islands and pick bunches of *Mysotidium nobile* on their sandy shores."

"What's that?"

"It's a great prehistoric forget-me-not, and it's being exterminated by cattle," he added darkly. "Then there's Tiburón at the top of the Gulf of California. That's a queer place. As big as the Isle of Wight, hardly six hundred miles as the crow flies from Los Angeles, and nobody seems to know anything about it. The abode of iguanas and the resort of a mysterious tribe of Indians reputed to be cannibals. Who knows what minerals may not be there?"

"The Philosopher's Stone," I interjected.

"New plants too, probably, though it's an arid spot."

"Perhaps the Tree of Life," I said, refilling his glass.

He did not reply and I, wondering on which of so many longed-for beaches his mind had landed, was silent too. I thought of Biscoe as I remembered him at Cambridge, and long before that of Biscoe at school. There his greatest adventure had been to join the Field Club and kill an adder in Richmond Park. He had shown it to us bottled in spirits of wine; it was passed round the form, and somebody had dropped the jar. Macnamara was the usher, a lean mathematician with a pointed beard, who in a flaccid trance worked out quadratic equations on the blackboard. I could remember nothing else about Biscoe except that he was always bent industriously over his books and exercises. I saw more of him at Cambridge out of a kind of sentimental loyalty, because we had been thrown together on the first day of our first term. I did not want him to think

that I was giving myself airs when I got to know everybody. When we went into College, I used to visit him about once a week in his remote rooms that looked down into the garden court. We never talked about anything except his prospects in the Tripos. I had no idea that he dreamed of islands, and I don't suppose that it would have interested me much in those days if I had known. I should certainly never have suspected him of appreciating good Burgundy.

Biscoe drained his glass and pulled a newspaper cutting from his waistcoat pocket.

"Read that."

SOUTH SEAS SETTLEMENT

LADIES and Gentlemen with a modest amount of capital and anxious to gratify their romantic inclinations are invited to write Box H, 5630, The Times E.C.4.

"I should say a hoax," was my comment.

"That was my notion," he agreed. "I read it the day before yesterday and I've been wondering about it ever since. It might be genuine, don't you think?"

He looked so wistful, if any man can be said to look wistful after drinking a bottle of Burgundy, that I lacked the heart to insist upon the improbability of its being anything more solid than another South Sea bubble that would be pricked by deeper investigations.

"There would be no harm in writing to Box 5630," I suggested. "If you find yourself in communication with a begging-letter writer, you have only to harden your heart to escape any serious consequences."

"But it might be genuine," Biscoe repeated. "And if it is, you know, Marsham, I've a damn good mind to go in for it. No, I'm not drunk. I'm merely sick of the Museum. I'm sick of writing that the rocks are unmistakably of volcanic origin, that they consist of

fragmental materials in the form of scoriæ and fragments from the tuffs, and of lavas from the streams which alternate with the tuffs, or from the dykes which intersect the islands and bind the loose beds and lava stones together."

Biscoe waved his arms almost savagely.

"Let's have another bottle! Dash it! I'm sick of plagioclases and olivines and crippled augite grains and minutely octahedral magnetite. I don't want to examine rocks in microscopic sections. I don't care a damn if a basic glassy rock is a tachylite soluble in acids or a zyalomelane insoluble in acids. I want to climb the cascades of lava myself!"

"But your advertisement says nothing about cascades of lava," I objected.

"I'm speaking figuratively," Biscoe shouted. "Why doesn't that waiter bring another bottle? Once I was there! Don't you see my point? I've saved up a few hundreds of pounds."

"And you're not a tachylite," I laughed.

"What do you mean?"

"You're evidently not going to be dissolved by any acid I can bring to bear on you. Waiter! Can't you see this gentleman waving to you? He is a zyalomelane, a most uncompromising zyalomelane. He is insoluble in acid, and if you bring the worst bottle of Claret in your cellars, he will survive it. Nevertheless, we won't risk it. So bring another bottle of the same. Go on, Biscoe."

"It's no use your laughing at me, Marsham. There comes a moment when a man feels that he must live. Do you realize that I've never been nearer to the tropics than the south of Brittany? You probably think I'm drunk. Perhaps I am. But if nobody ever had been drunk, mankind would still be living on limpets. If you ask my opinion, I believe that a monkey drank too much one day and imagined himself a man.

That's my explanation of the jump. The missing link is the vine. Dionysiac mysteries! It's just because I am drunk that I realize I've had enough of museums. I'm glad I met you to-night, Marsham. I should have gone back to my rooms in Ebury Street and fingered this cutting from *The Times* and slept on it and gone back to the Museum and laughed at myself. Now I'm going to investigate this matter. If it's a hoax, it can't be helped. But I don't believe it is. I believe that I'm on the verge of an adventure. Here, waiter, bring me a pen and ink and writing paper. I'm going to write to Box H, 5630, and when we've finished our third bottle, by God, Marsham, we'll go and make a geological examination of Piccadilly."

Biscoe, chuckling to himself, applied his mind to answering the advertisement.

"Those are exactly what I have got," he said. "Romantic inclinations."

CHAPTER II

PARADISE FOR SALE

I WOKE with a head next morning and remembered that my birthday was not far off. I was getting too old for the kind of evening I had spent with Biscoe. I interrogated myself upon the signs of middle age. How was I to know the exact moment in which I ought to turn my back on youth and begin that slow recession from the joys of life? I was thinking that I must have drunk that third bottle carelessly, without giving proper attention to the sediment. Perhaps it had not really been Romanée St. Vivant, like the others. Perhaps we had been fobbed off by the waiter with an inky Pommard.

Then—and here it is that Burgundy makes manifest the fleeting charm of other wines—I pulled myself together. I was still fortified. The sky had rained itself out. I would walk ten miles, and I discovered that I was not even approaching middle age, for never had my impressions been less blunted, never had any walk regarded merely as a piece of exercise seemed so complete as this walk. The houses had all been washed by the rain, the trees in the park—I pause in a vain attempt to find words to give you the sensation of their verdure. Once upon a time I might have said that the leaves were virescent, and thus tried to incorporate vitality in greenness. With every step I took, my head became clearer, so that every new creature I met appeared more significant than the last until the whole visible scene struck me like a revelation. And all the time I was walking, I thought about nothing. My

imagination added nothing to anybody, nobody to anything.

At the end of the walk, which was Wimbledon Common, I sat on the grass in the sun and announced to myself that if that advertisement in *The Times* was not a hoax I should go to the South Seas with Biscoe. I could not conceive that I should ever again be given the whole of London as I had held it throughout this walk, that I should ever again be in fact myself London, that ever again the genius of London should inhabit me as a dryad, an oak. That being the case, it was obvious that I could not accept the substitute by sharing London with several millions. Any specialized experience of city life after that compendium of experience granted to me during this walk, after that quintessential knowledge, would be impossibly humiliating. This may have sounded an over-elaborate way of saying that I wanted a change of air, and I do feel like somebody who has tried to share with other people the incommunicable pleasures of a dream.

That evening about six o'clock Biscoe rang me up at my club. I remember that, when the page came into the billiard room to say that I was being asked for on the telephone, I had just volunteered the pink ball. Now the pink ball is my favorite and I did not want to spoil my "pot" by being in too much of a hurry. So I asked my partner and our opponents to excuse me.

"It's all right," Biscoe cried with such intensity of excitement that his voice blasted in the sound-box and buzzed about my ears like a bluebottle-fly. "Where can we meet to discuss things? I want you to come with me to-morrow. They talk of sailing quite soon."

The swaying floor of the telephone-box was the deck of an outward-bounder. I felt expansive and offered to dine with him at his little place in Greek Street.

"Splendid! Half-past seven?"

"All right. But what's it called?"

"The South Seas Settlement Company, Limited."

"No, no, the restaurant?"

"Aux Petites Pommes."

"What? Spell it."

"A for anthracite, U for uranium, X for xylocarp. . . ." And so he went on through a catalogue of ridiculous objects.

I rang off and went back to my game. There was the pink ball waiting portentously for my shot. There were the other balls forming, as it seemed to me, an ineffably monumental pattern. The table brooded like a savanna in the rays of the noontide sun. The watchers along the dais were the immortalized figures in a frieze. That one who sipped a dry Martini summed up in his attitude all who had ever sipped, all who were sipping now, and all who ever would sip dry Martinis. Equally immortal was the gesture of him who flung away the six o'clock *Pall Mall Gazette,* and the expression of him that related a tale and of them that listened. The marker was eternal: the jigger lay along his arm not less sublimely than the thyrsus of Hermes. My partner and our opponents waited like Argive warriors, their cues at rest, javelin-wise. Not only is the pink ball my favorite, but I have always had a superstitious regard for it; and now as I bent over the table to make my shot, I intrusted it with the domination of my fortune. Should it miss the pocket, I would not dine with Biscoe. But it did not miss the pocket: it did not even graze the cushion. And I felt that nobody had ever and that nobody would ever quite so surely, quite so centrally, quite so beautifully pot the pink ball again. I was no longer depressed by the imagination of him who for the first time had potted the pink ball, nor of him who in the ultimate future would, shivering on this fast-cooling planet, pot for the last time the pink ball. I had made the perfect pot. I had beheld in however humble disguise Absolute Truth.

The restaurant, *Aux Petites Pommes,* was of the usual type. There was a dying bay-tree in a half-barrel by the entrance; the waiters would wave their dishes round their heads like cowboys with lassoes; two or three guests ate noisily with napkins tucked beneath their chins; most of the others read the bill of fare with as much embarrassment as they would have read Zola in public. Biscoe was too much excited to pay any attention to the right ordering of our dinner. I remember that it was definitely bad and that it included a salad of what looked and tasted like wooden toothpicks.

"But read this letter!" he exclaimed to my protest that the soup was cold.

South Seas Settlement Company, Limited
129 Panton Street, W.

June 7th, 19—

Dear Sir,

In reply to your query, dated the 6th, I shall be happy to give you an interview at the offices of the Company to-morrow, June 8th, at eleven o'clock. Meanwhile I inclose for your perusal several pamphlets which will give you a rough idea of our proposals. I may add that I should be glad if you can make a point of visiting me to-morrow, as our list of applicants is practically full and we are anxious to sail as soon as possible. In the hope that you will be sufficiently interested in our scheme to feel that it is worth your while to give me an interview, I remain,

Yours faithfully,
Benjamin Harper,
Sec. S. S. S. Co., Ltd.

"And now, Marsham, do read these pamphlets. I assure you it's exactly what I've been wanting for years. Take this one, for example."

I took it and read:

Are You Searching for Peace?

In these days of rapid transit amid the hooting of motors and the din of factories there must be few people who have not at some time or another longed "to be out of it all." To such our plan for settling a tract of land in one of the most beautiful islands of the South Pacific must make a special appeal.

Are You Ready for Eden?

Ever since our first forefathers were ejected from Paradise humanity has longed to return to its primal innocence. The South Seas Settlement Company, Limited offers you the chance. By investing a comparatively small sum of money (particulars of which can be obtained from the Secretary of the S. S. S. Co., Ltd., at 129 Panton Street, one minute from Piccadilly Tube Station) you can re-enter at your own choice the Garden of Eden.

Those Who Doubt

our ability to fulfil this promise are asked to imagine two thousand acres of highly fertile virgin soil on which anything may be grown that they have read of in their wildest dreams, and to still further imagine a luxurious private yacht, replete with every comfort, placed at the disposal of the fortunate colonists, and to finally once more imagine a practical business corporation devoted to their interests and ready to guarantee 10% on any capital invested.

Do We Exaggerate

when we claim that we are offering you in exchange for the humdrum existence of modern urban life

Paradise?

Was it not old Omar Khayam who said: "A loaf of bread and you beside me in the wilderness, and wilderness were

Paradise enough?" We shall not be accused of undue boasting if we claim to offer you a great deal more.*

Accommodation

It seems prosaic to talk of houses in such a fairyland, but the South Seas Settlement Company realizing that human nature cannot jump back thousands of years in the brief space of three months (the maximum time estimated for the voyage out) has left nothing undone to minister to the weaknesses of

The Modern Man.

Civilization with all its blessings has made us dependent on externals. It is a far cry from the Ritz Hotel to the smoke-blackened caves of the primitive savage. We do not claim to offer our clients the Ritz Hotel. We venture to think that the type of man and woman to whom we appeal would not thank us for offering them the Ritz Hotel. But we do offer

Bungalows

strongly built of a rare and fragrant native wood which is proof against the attacks of the ubiquitous and voracious white ant.† Apart from this universal minor disadvantage of the tropics the insect life is scarce in this blessed spot, and though we have provided our bungalows with a netted veranda, we may take this opportunity of saying that

Mosquitoes Are PRACTICALLY *Unknown.*

Reptiles, with the exception of a few attractively colored lizards, are equally unknown, and even such centipedes and scor-

* It has been calculated by an expert that the land offered by the South Seas Settlement Company, Limited, is capable of growing coconuts, vanilla, coffee, indigo, guavas, mangoes, pineapples, paw-paws, sugar-cane, bananas, limes, oranges, and many other varieties of tropical fruits and spices.

† Even Paradise contained the Serpent, but our readers need not apprehend any personal unpleasantness from white ants which have never been known to interfere with human beings.

pions as exist in the remote mountain fastnesses never invade human habitations. Some sensational writers have held forth upon the numbers of cockroaches. We hasten to assure our readers that they must take such travelers' tales "with a pinch of salt," and when we add that the only cockroaches which our lady colonists are likely to meet are emerald-green we feel sure that they will not longer be inclined to confuse them with the vulgar and prolific black beetle of civilization. We assume that it is unnecessary for us to add that carnivorous animals are conspicuous by their absence.

Nor has the South Seas Settlement Company neglected its clients in other respects.

A Splendid Wharf

has been erected with a view to facilitating the large export trade in fruit which it is confidently anticipated will begin almost at once, inasmuch as the whole sea-frontage of the estate is, if we may use the expression, "literally alive with"

Coconuts in Full Bearing.

We hesitate to draw attention to the profitable possibilities of pearl fishing, because our readers will realize that

Pearls

cannot be looked upon as a certain "crop." At the same time the pearls are undoubtedly there, and with the assistance of the skilful native divers our colonists should emphatically be able to add an occasional "windfall" to their already large incomings from cultivation of the "teeming earth." In addition to pearls, the waters in the vicinity of the settlement yield the trepang, or bêche de mer, a delicacy highly esteemed by the Chinese and considered an indispensable accessory to the simplest banquet in the Far East. Sportsmen, several of whom we hope to number among our settlers, will not be slow to take advantage of hunting the swordfish, which has been aptly called the "terror of the deep" inasmuch as it has been known

when infuriated to pierce with its powerful appendage not only the bottom of a canoe, but also for a considerable distance the body of the unfortunate steersman.

Have We Said Enough

to persuade you that it is worth your while to give us a call at our general offices (129 Panton Street, W. One minute from Piccadilly Tube Station) where the Secretary of the Company will be happy to answer any further questions and fully explain the financial strength of the scheme?

"It sounds wonderful, doesn't it?" said Biscoe, as I finished reading the prospectus.

I looked at him in amazement. Could he, who might be presumed to have at any rate a rudimentary knowledge of scientific evidence, be really so credulous as his remark would infer?

"It seems to me a perfectly blatant fraud," I protested.

"I don't agree with you."

"But, my dear Biscoe, surely your training at the Museum, your own experiments and researches must make that clear?"

He adjusted his glasses, as if he were trying to focus my incredulity and bring his mind to bear upon the proper cure for it.

"I think, if you'll pardon my frankness, I think, Marsham, that you have allowed yourself to grow old——"

I smiled, cynically I hoped, without any trace of bitterness.

"You have outgrown the spirit of adventure," Biscoe continued in a tone of gentle reproof. "And by letting this happen you have begun to suppose that adventures no longer exist. If the contrary were proved, you would be rather annoyed. It would interfere with

your formula of life. You are really anxious not to believe in the genuineness of this adventure."

"I'd sooner be proved wrong in my disbelief than in my belief," I said. "If this absurd tissue of nonsense in spite of its manifest absurdity turns out to be true, I shall certainly be sufficiently interested to carry the business of investigation through to the end. But if, as it must be, the whole thing is a falsehood, a gross and impudent falsehood, you will not merely be disappointed, but you will exhibit yourself to me and to everybody else as a perfect ass."

It really hurt me to feel that Biscoe without any inspiration from a good dinner or good wine should be ready to believe this rubbish. It irritated me as I am irritated when apparently hard-headed men of business believe in spiritualistic manifestations or when I read of priestcraft and its victims. There seemed to exist a horrible prostration of the will as well as of the brain. And I was annoyed with myself for having last night under the influence of Burgundy allowed Biscoe to make such a fool of himself.

"Well, what will you bet me?" he asked.

This was too much. I saw no reason why in view of the bad dinner, the bad wine, and his degraded display of fatuous gullibility, Biscoe should not be fined at least two pounds. For this sum, therefore, I wagered my conviction of fraud. He asked me to come with him to-morrow when he had his interview with the Secretary, and when I told him that I should enjoy seeing how the fellow worked his game, Biscoe humored me with a gentle smile. Presently the waiter put before each of us an apple and a banana, and while Biscoe ate his portion very slowly on account of the fibrous insides, he talked lusciously of the fruits and spices he would grow on his paradisal allotment.

"But confound it," I cried in exasperation, "you don't even know where the island is!"

"We shall know to-morrow."

"I suppose you have the faith that moves islands. After all, it might be easier to move an island than a mountain."

Nothing shook Biscoe. He sat and beamed complacently while he slowly flayed my banana, having by now eaten his own.

"You're still hungry," I pointed out. "What about supper? Our dinner has given me quite an appetite."

We had an excellent mayonnaise of lobster at Scott's which put me in a better humor. I think I was right to suggest Stout after the wine of the *Petites Pommes*. What I felt about Stout was that, though it might not create in me a mood of achievement, it would at any rate do something to counteract the acidity of outlook which had been induced by the wine. This was further helped by two glasses of Grand Marnier to each of which had been added half as much again of Cognac. Finally we smoked Murias. Now, I am not particularly fond of Murias; but these Murias, long, slim, and shapely, remain in my memory as among the best cigars I have ever smoked. By the time I was half-way through mine I had almost accepted Biscoe's dream. I was already nibbling tentatively at the lotus. A delicious contempt of probability, a languorous indifference to facts overcame me. I succumbed to discussing with Biscoe the possibility of importing hummingbirds from Brazil to his unnamed island in order to abolish the necessity of fertilizing the individual blooms of *Vanilla planifolia* with a camel's-hair brush.

We went on to the Pavilion, and I had an impression, which has lasted to the present day, that we saw an unusually good variety performance. I wonder if we did.

CHAPTER III

SOUTH SEA BUBBLES

THE next morning was as wet as it could have been; and while I waited for Biscoe at Piccadilly Tube Station, I wished that for two pounds his South Seas Company could be a genuine business so that we might escape from London. It struck me how absurd it was to make my escape dependent upon such an unlikely event. There was no reason why a bachelor of no occupation like myself should not be packing up for the tropics within half an hour. There was no reason why I should endure any longer this enveloping smell of wet waterproofs and overused air, this noise of clanging lifts, this press and flurry of humanity, this urban existence, as the author of the prospectus would have called it. Yet merely for the want of a conventional object I was ready to be enslaved by my surroundings. I was like a man who hesitates to explore a beautiful landscape because it lacks a golf course. Golf was all very well when it was played on links where nobody would have faced the wind and driven sand unless he had set himself the task of propelling a ball across it. I recognize that sometimes walking has to be eked out with factitious aids. I can remember as a child overcoming the boredom of a hot and dusty road by setting myself the task of rolling a mangel-wurzel before me less than a given number of times before I reached the gates of our drive. The satisfaction of realizing that I was going to arrive long before the hundred throws I had allowed myself was succeeded half way home by the

nearly intolerable excitement of wondering if enough of the mangel-wurzel would remain to achieve my victory. By the time I reached home in what seemed a magically brief space of time there was not much more of that mangel-wurzel than would have barely turned the scale against the core of an apple. Yes, if good billiards presume a misspent youth, good golf proves a misspent maturity.

"I am so sorry I've kept you waiting," Biscoe exclaimed over my shoulder at that moment. "I am so sorry, but I had to deal with several things at the Museum before I came out."

"You haven't handed in your resignation?"

"No," he hesitated. "But I told the chief that I probably should be resigning in a few days."

We plunged into the rain and did not say another word until we set foot on the threshold of 129 Panton Street. It was one of many private houses that in the last twenty years have been turned into offices by putting rubber treads on the stairs, leaving the front door continually open, and labeling an Ishmaelite bell *Housekeeper.* I have always supposed that this bell is segregated from the others, because it is an imitation. Certainly I have never succeeded in extracting a housekeeper by ringing for her.

We read through the list of office occupants:

Ground Floor
1. *Dana. Modes.*
2. *The Vulcanite Corn Shield Company.*

First Floor
3. *Mr. J. B. Nyson. Consulting Expert of Antiques.*
4. *The Cigarette Makers' Aid Society*

Second Floor
5. *The Pantophone Company (Ltd).*
6. *Manon. Modes.*

Third Floor { 7. *Mr. Clarence Lane. Theatrical Agent.*
8. *The South Seas Settlement Co. (Ltd).*

"There you are!" Biscoe triumphed. "I told you it was genuine!"

He took the stairs three at a time with the help of the rickety banisters which every moment I expected would be uprooted by the strain he put upon them. At last we stood on a landing under a skylight and prepared to look like worthy colonists.

In spite of myself I could not help feeling excited. I have often mocked at the reverence we moderns accord to the printed word. I suppose it was the printing of the Bible with its reputation for verbal infallibility that originally begot this reverence in us; and though people often declare that one never can believe what the papers say, such things as they always will be saying, this is but a superficial piece of profane bravado, for of course they do believe most fervidly. So now I, when I saw the brass plate of what my intelligence assured me was a bogus concern, became half convinced of its authenticity, and in my ears the faint traffic of London was like a sea heard in some dusty tropic shell of childhood.

"I very much doubt," I said to Biscoe as we entered the office, "if any human mind susceptible to the temptations of desire or governable even for the briefest instant by emotion can claim to be truly skeptical. The will to believe is really an impulse to create, and sometimes I wonder if persistent skepticism should not be counted among the unnatural vices."

Mr. Benjamin Harper was alone. The loud ticking of a white metal clock on his desk produced the effect of a typewriting machine in action; and because one looked round for the typist in vain, one was the more sharply aware of Mr. Harper's solitude. He was a

burly creature with a pendulous underlip and large globular light blue eyes, who would have given an impression of flaccidity if one had not immediately been struck by his hands, which were broad and capable, but at the same time well modeled and the shapely embodiment of nervous strength. His voice had that unction which always appears to fidget its possessors with the idea that it is oozing over them and that they must wash it off their hands. Mr. Harper did not suffer from this embarrassment. When his hands entered the conversation to support what he was saying, they came in as peremptorily as side-drums.

"And which is Mr. Biscoe?" he inquired blandly.

Biscoe presented himself.

"And this gentleman is a friend of yours?"

I nodded.

"My appointment was with Mr. Biscoe," said Harper. "In an enterprise such as ours we have found it necessary to pick and choose somewhat before we grant a personal interview. We do not grant personal interviews to everybody, Mr. Biscoe. Perhaps I should have made this clear in my letter to you; but I did not gather from your letter to me that you were acting with somebody else in your inquiries. You must remember that we have had hundreds of inquiries to our discreetly worded advertisement. Many have called, but few are chosen, Mr. Biscoe, if I may thus without impropriety alter slightly the scriptural phrase."

When he spoke, it flashed across me that Mr. Harper had somehow altered the scriptural phrase in himself, that he suggested in fact not precisely a caricature, but an almost imperceptibly slight distortion of a parson.

"I am extremely sorry," said Biscoe, who was so obviously afraid of spoiling his chance by the least mistake that Mr. Harper looked stern and drummed

upon the table vigorously with his fingers, as if he were drumming poor Biscoe out of Eden.

"Extremely sorry," Biscoe repeated. "I had no idea that you would feel like this about Mr. Marsham's accompanying me."

"It's most regrettable," said Harper. "But we have to guard ourselves against intrusion. Only this morning I had forcibly to eject from this office a candidate for our colony. You may have heard of a superstitious sect who call themselves Nature Men? This was a Nature Man."

I asked what their tenets were.

"Their tenets are to walk about with nothing on," said Harper.

"But surely," I argued, although I knew I was doing myself no good by such a proposition, "surely to the Paradise you have so magically depicted with your pen, such people would be thoroughly appropriate."

"If," said Harper pompously, "if you had been able to read the list of our accepted settlers you would have realized that several of the names among them would much object to having Nature Men in their midst. We number several ladies among our clients, one or two of whom are maiden ladies. But I am being led into a discussion, Mr. Marsham, and while not wishing to be in any way rude or abrupt I must emphatically say at this point that I do not wish to be led into a discussion. In fact if Mr. Biscoe has any desire to consult me, I must—without intending to cast the least slur upon you personally, Mr. Marsham, but rules are rules, are they not?—I really must ask you to leave Mr. Biscoe and myself together."

I tried to point out the futility of fancying that by merely getting rid of me he would prevent my finding out about his precious scheme; but he would not see reason and kept repeating "rules are rules," drumming

all the while upon the table, until suddenly his face went livid and he bellowed at me:

"Damnation seize you! Rules are rules, and the sooner you get to hell out of this office, the better for you!"

His fingers had closed in an access of fury round a brass crab that served him for a paper-weight; and I, perceiving that, if I wanted to know more about the South Seas Settlement Company, I must depend on Biscoe, withdrew in some chagrin from the office.

I was no sooner on the landing than I wanted to go back and demonstrate to Mr. Harper, with my fist if necessary, that I had not been overborne by his truculence. On second thoughts this struck me as hardly worth while, and my next idea was to leave Biscoe to his well-merited fate, to let Harper pluck Biscoe of his savings, never to accept another invitation to dine with Biscoe, never to ask Biscoe to dine with me, in fact to expunge Biscoe from my consciousness. And then suddenly it occurred to me that there might after all be something more in the South Seas Settlement Company than a commonplace swindle. My first idea had been that the prospective client would be asked to put down a sum of money as guarantee of his good faith and that when Mr. Benjamin Harper had collected enough he would decamp. But his manner to me, although it gave me quite definitely the notion that he was a thorough villain, prevented my believing this to be possible. Had such been his intention he would surely have taken the trouble to conciliate me. But in any case why had he not taken the trouble to conciliate me? Was I to presume that Biscoe had written such a letter as had led him to expect a perfect gull? And had I by my manner led him to suppose that he would find me an obstacle to his plan for extracting money from Biscoe? It flattered my vanity to dwell for a moment on the likelihood of just this.

Without being aware of it, I must have compressed my face to a similitude of the sternness and strength one may see in the works of popular illustrators, for in that moment I was addressed with extreme obsequiousness by a human scarecrow, one of those queer creatures that even in London earn a backward glance from the passer-by, just as in dribbling the pages of a book one catches sight of a caricature, holds it in the eye an instant, and then dribbles the rest of the pages more quickly with a slight sense of shame in having wasted even that instant of regard. This scarecrow was a tall gaunt man with long flaxen hair hanging over his shoulders, a tangled yellow beard and horseshoe mustache, and feverish eyes. He wore a cassock of sackcloth with a rope girdle, carried a kind of shepherd's crook, and was shod with sandals. He was the sort of figure that stands on the curbstones of busy pavements and in a hollow and incredulous voice demands of every passer-by his conviction of eternal security.

"Sir," he said to me, "I am really most anxious to get back to the Pacific, and I have come to say that, if in your opinion clothes are a necessity, I am willing to wear clothes. I earnestly hope that you will appreciate my desire to conform and that in any capacity whatsoever you will find me a job in your ship—in any capacity whatsoever to make myself useful, for I must get back. Oh, sir, I must indeed! The French were always very kind to me in Tahiti. They never interfered with me as long as I did not walk about naked in Papeete. I always wore my gown in Papeete."

It was time for me to explain my position.

"I beg your pardon, sir; I thought this was the office of the South Seas Settlement Company."

"This is the landing outside the office."

"Ah, yes, so it is," he assented vaguely. "I remember now that I came in this way. But the gentleman

inside pushed me out of the office so quickly this morning that I was half-way downstairs before I knew where I was. I beg your pardon, sir, I'm sure, for accosting you like this. My mind is a little confused, to tell you the truth. Yes, I seem to have a kind of confusion in my mind. I really can't think about anything else except how to get back to the Pacific. Even to be in sight of the sea would be something, and last year I did walk to Brighton. It was so unfortunate. I suppose my head must have been in some confusion after the long walk, but when I got to Brighton I felt that I must take off all my clothes, and then I was put in a hospital for a time, because I'm afraid a number of people were quite upset by my appearance running along the sea-front with nothing on like that."

I asked him why he had left the South Seas.

"I ate the apple, sir. The woman tempted me. She was an English governess to a wealthy French planter in Tahiti. Delilah! She said she would marry me if I would cut my hair and dress like an ordinary human being. I did so. I became a renegade. I denied Nature. I blasphemed the Mighty and Beneficent Mother. Then she laughed and sailed away to England. But I followed her. I worked my way in a schooner to Callao. And from there in a tramp to Guayaquil, and from Guayaquil to Salina Cruz. Then I walked across the Isthmus until I came to the cursed Atlantic. After that I was in Jamaica and after Jamaica in St. Lucia where I stayed until an English yacht arrived one day and two of the sailors came ashore and were bitten by the fer-de-lance snake and died, and I got a job on board and came to England. This was four years ago, and I have never found the woman I loved and I have never been able to go back to the Pacific. If I stay here any longer I shall die. When I read in the paper about these people going out to live a simple life, I wrote to the address; but this

morning when I came, they were very rude, because I explained to them that I was a Nature Man. I explained to them about Nacktkultur and how many people in Germany were practising it even in the snow. Why, the apostle in my country went everywhere in only skis and he was never feeling the cold."

I asked him if he was a German; and he told me that his people were Danes who had emigrated to Australia. But when I asked him what had first taken him to the South Seas and how he had first become a Nature Man, his narration turned obscure and cloudy like that of a patient who would relate in the gray morning the feverish processions and pantomimes of the night.

"And how do you live in London?"

"I always eat bananas," he told me. "When I have a little money from painters for whom I sit as model, I spend it on bunches of bananas which I hang in my room."

"But where do you live?"

"Sometimes here and sometimes there," he informed me with the ambiguity of those hirsute beings in Edward Lear's *Book of Nonsense*.

I felt that it was undignified to stay talking just outside the Company's office, and I should have liked to invite Andersen—he had told me that his name was Eric Andersen—to come and discuss the Pacific in a tavern highly renowned for its sherry and port, and close to where we were. At the same time, although I am not in any sense of the word a conventional man, nevertheless what rubbish! who really ever escapes from convention unless he enters a lunatic asylum? Yes, I was perfectly ready to embark on an adventure in the South Seas, but I was afraid to walk down Panton Street with a long-haired Dane in sandals and sackcloth.

"You know nothing more about this Company than

what you read in their advertisements and pamphlets?" I asked.

"No, I know nothing about them. But they are going to the Pacific, and I must get back there. Somehow. Somehow. I have tried so many ships. But they always have plenty of sailors and they laugh when I offer them myself. And I want to go back. I want to go back," he groaned with tears in his eyes.

When this poor scarecrow all sodden with our northern rain lamented thus, I knew that I would forgo the most beautiful and the most famous cities of Europe; that I would leave still unvisited the isles of Greece and dream no more of walking at twilight in the perfumed orchards of Damascus; that for me Baghdad might remain a legend and Babylon an unregarded ruin; that eastward neither Lhassa nor Pekin could call me, and westward not even the entangled altars of Guatemala; that I would sail past the green Azores without regret, and the whole bulk of Africa utterly ignore, and about the Indies read only in books, if by so doing I might behold these islands of the Far South and assure myself that they were not the fables, the fancies and the follies of deceiving travelers.

I made up my mind that, should this expedition prove genuine after all, I would in gratitude for such an adventure somehow achieve Andersen's return. Meanwhile, I advised him not to go near the office again; having given him my address, I left him and took the opportunity of being in the neighborhood to pay a visit to my tailor in Savile Row.

Mr. Hunt was a small man with a brisk manner, stubby mustache, and cropped hair, who darted about among his wares like an animated clothes-brush. His romantic disposition had managed to invest even so simple a matter as not being married with a kind of superb renunciation. Life presented itself to Mr. Hunt

as an array of mighty onsets by the powers of Evil, against which he advanced with the courage of a David. He used to remind me of the tailor in the fairy-tale who earned such a reputation by killing seven at a blow. Like his, Hunt's victories may have been over flies; but depend upon it, they were dragons to Hunt. He was of the lineage of Don Quixote, and Hibben was his Sancho Panza.

I found him bustling round the shop and moving about some new bales of tweed as a drill sergeant might move a squad of recruits.

"Good morning, Hunt."

"Good morning, sir. Why, by Jove, it's Mr. Marsham!"

This was what I had been waiting for, this impression that Hunt could always give me of being an emperor whose majesty had burst from its disguise and almost stunned the onlookers.

"Hibben!" he called to his friend and helper. "Here's Mr. Marsham!"

Hibben emerged with just the expression of wonder and delight which he knew was demanded.

"By Jove, so it is! Well, this is a pleasure, sir. Upon my word it is!"

I suppose it may have been about a month since I had paid my last visit.

"Mr. Hunt has been ill, sir," Hibben announced.

I looked sympathetic, while Hunt, who was however obviously grateful to Hibben for giving the right cue, pooh-poohed the matter.

"A mere nothing, sir, upon my word. Hibben was always a bit of a donkey, as you know, sir. Hibben, you know you're always a bit of a donkey. I feared a tumor, sir. Yes, sir, in the stomach, if you'll pardon the mention. And I said to Hibben, I said, 'Hibben, by gad, if I have to go under, I'll go under fighting!' That was just before I started off to see the specialist.

You don't blame me, sir, do you, for wishing to die game? But it turned out to be nothing. No, sir, it was a false alarm. It wasn't a tumor at all. No operation was necessary. It was an attack of indigestion."

"But we were all very much relieved when Mr. Hunt came back and told us," Hibben put in.

"I believe they were, sir," Hunt declared. "I honestly believe that there was not one person in my employment from Hibben to the charwoman who did not feel relieved. By Jove, sir, that's the sort of thing that makes a man feel like a woman, sir. Devotion. Yes, sir, by Jove, sir! I felt like a woman. Upon my word I did, sir."

Whereupon Hunt, ashamed of such emotional weakness, picked up six bales of tweed that were standing in a critical and slightly contemptuous attitude and flung them one after another on their faces in the corner of the shop.

I suppose that a barber receives more confidences in the course of his day's work than anybody else. I have often wondered why having one's hair cut should loosen the tongue in the way it undoubtedly does. I have heard grumpy old gentlemen revealing their most intimate thoughts and feelings to pert young hairdressers that were administering to them. Heaven knows I have done the same myself often enough. It may have something to do with the scissors, for I find this tendency to confession nearly as impelling when I am in treaty with my tailor. I choose ties and shirts without the slightest desire to reveal to my hosier where I have spent the week-end or what I hope to do next summer. I apply myself to the problem of a new hat with an intellectual aloofness that places me and my hatter as far apart as planets. But my hairdresser or my tailor. . . . Yes, I really do think it must be the scissors.

"Hunt, I want to look at some patterns of light Donegal tweed."

"By Jove, sir, do you, sir? Well now, upon my soul, if that isn't very remarkable? Didn't I remark to you, Hibben, only yesterday what a pity it was that Mr. Marsham didn't pay us a visit and take a glance at our light Donegals? We have some really important weavings we can show you, sir. Hibben!"

Hibben offered me the book and watched me as a good waiter watches his customer take the first sip of a carefully chosen wine.

"Mr. Hunt was saying only yesterday he called them dashing, but not fast."

"That's quite correct, sir, what Hibben says. Those were my very words, sir. They're individual, but not eccentric. You'll be perfectly safe in any one of those, sir. There's not one of them will what I call run away with you."

"I'm thinking of running away with myself presently, Hunt."

"You are, sir?" Hunt exclaimed, looking splendidly concerned.

"Yes," I went on, now launched upon my confession. "I'm thinking of going to the South Seas."

"By gad, sir, why don't you? It would be the very thing for you, sir! Hibben, it would be the very thing for Mr. Marsham, would it not?"

"I believe it might," Hibben agreed.

"Although why we ask Hibben," Hunt laughed, "I don't know. Hibben is more familiar with South London than the South Seas."

Here Hunt was bent double with laughter in one corner of the shop, while Hibben in another corner was bent double with tone for tone the same laughter.

"But you must pardon me, sir," Hunt said, suddenly straightening himself and looking intensely serious. "Hibben!"

Hibben at once retired gravely to the inner part of the shop.

"You must pardon Hibben too, sir. The donkey cannot control himself."

I asked Hunt what he thought of the South Seas Settlement Company; I told him about Benjamin Harper and about Andersen, the Nature Man; I said how much I hoped for Mr. Biscoe's sake that there was really something in it.

"Do you know what I am going to do, sir? I'm going to investigate, sir. I am, sir, by Jove, I am! I'm going to apply to this fellow and find out. You'll laugh at poor old Hunt, sir. You'll think him as big a donkey as Hibben. But laugh away, sir. Hunt's going to get to the bottom of this business. Don't you bother about those light Donegals, sir. You won't want them now. Do you know what you'll want, sir? You'll want a tropical outfit. You will, sir. And by Gad, sir, you shall have the best we can find you. Hibben! Make a note to go thoroughly and completely into the question of a tropical outfit for Mr. Marsham."

I felt as I walked out of Savile Row that in spite of the driving rain I could face the future not merely with confidence but positively with enthusiasm. My whole brain was a banner with a strange device; it was as if Hunt with his needle had tattooed upon my forehead *Excelsior.*

CHAPTER IV

BISCOE DECIDES

WHEN Biscoe rang me up at the club to say that he had lots to tell me, I suggested coming round to his rooms in Ebury Street about nine o'clock. I neither wanted to be made too sanguine by excess of Burgundy nor too cynical by dining with Biscoe in Soho. The thoroughly wholesome and perfectly uninteresting dinner of the Z—— club would be a suitable overture to a South Seas drama.

Biscoe's rooms as I saw them for the first time do not deserve much description. There were photographs of mountains on the yellowish-brown wall paper, and the mantelpiece was draped with some thick material of sage-green. All the comfort of his landlady's armchairs had been sacrificed to the elaborate carving of their frames; the cloth, which covered only half the table, had not been cleared away after his dinner; Biscoe himself was puffing hard at bird's-eye in a great gnarled pipe that should have held nothing milder than negro-head Cavendish.

"There's no doubt whatever about its being a genuine enterprise," Biscoe began, the moment I had taken the chair he offered. "I'm sorry about the rudeness with which you were treated. I daresay you thought I should have been more firm . . . however, I insisted afterwards that the next time you came with me he should apologize."

"Oh, there is to be a next time?" I interrupted.

"Yes, and I promise that you will not laugh when you hear the details of the scheme." He spoke with

that priggish excitement which is associated in my mind with young dons or schoolmasters who are trying to work up a mock enthusiasm in their pupils for an alternative reading in Cicero. However, I looked politely expectant, and this is what he told me.

Harper had been a Wesleyan missionary who had lost his faith and resigned from the ministry, if that be the correct phrase. Biscoe added that he was under the impression of Harper's having been in some kind of trouble with his ecclesiastical superiors, a theory with which I cordially agreed. I could not imagine Harper's making a dignified renunciation of a soft job to ease his conscience. Still, it did not seem to matter much why he was no longer a missionary, provided that his present scheme was a practical concern. The sphere of his religious labors had been within the zone of French influence in the Pacific, and in the particular island to which he was proposing to take his settlers he represented that he was on terms of the closest intimacy with the King. He had not specified to Biscoe the precise reason why His Majesty was under any obligation to him; but, since no doubt the reason was not a creditable one, his refusal to make it known did not necessarily invalidate the story or turn to a mirage the Eden which the grateful monarch had bestowed upon him. What struck me as more than dubious was that Harper did not propose to reveal the destination of the colony until the expedition had started.

"My dear Biscoe," I protested. "You don't mean to tell me that you can accept as genuine such an indeterminate Paradise, which personally I should be inclined to suspect with every added detail of latitude and longitude?"

"It was rather a shock to me at first," he admitted. "But Harper justified the need for secrecy on political grounds. Apparently the French, although they do

not make any real effort to develop their Pacific colonies themselves, are violently jealous of anybody else who tries to develop them. He assured me that if our destination leaked out we should meet if not with a positive veto at any rate with the most tiresome obstruction."

"In that case why does he let his prospective clients know anything about his precious island? Opposition from the French is likely as soon as they hear a party is bound for any island in their zone. He seems to me both inconsistent and unwise in telling you as much as he has."

"The French zones are far apart," Biscoe argued. "There is the condominium with us in the New Hebrides. There are the Austral Islands, the Paumotus, the Society group, the Marquesas."

"Yes, yes, I know. But I'm not convinced by Mr. Harper's excuse."

"Still, he wouldn't charter a 300-ton yacht to go to the Isle of Wight," argued Biscoe, who was being irritated by my criticism of what he had not the slightest desire to disbelieve.

I begged him to go on with his tale, and I could see that he was hard put to it not to give up and sulk like an excitable schoolboy who has been teased about his adventures by grown-up listeners.

"If you really want to hear any more," he grumbled —and then the fair green dream spun itself round his fancy once more, so that he had to relate its beauties even to one as unsympathetic as I was showing myself.

The land made over to Harper was such a valley as Melville wrote of in *Typee*. In fact Harper had mentioned *Typee*, which had led Biscoe to feel pretty sure that the Eden was situated in the Marquesas.

"Or, Mr. Harper fancied that Melville's style would help his own and that *Typee* being recently pub-

lished in a cheap edition was easily procurable," I scoffed.

But Biscoe lay full fathoms five in a sea dream. His eyes were pearls; his brain was madrepore coral. My comments left him unmoved.

Harper had not known how to develop his possession, which had remained in the same state as it had been given him for two years. Then he had met a man—a vague figure this— who had found the money to pay for the erection of bungalows and who had financed Harper to enable him to charter a yacht and promote his scheme.

"And why didn't the French object to the bungalows being built?"

"I asked him that very question," said Biscoe. "And he told me that they know nothing about them. I am pretty sure that the land does really exist in one of those remote valleys of the Marquesas which are unvisited for years at a stretch."

"And the wharf? Is that invisible too?"

"Oh, no! Harper himself has already been doing a certain amount of trading."

"Has he? And how much money does he want from each—" I hesitated for a word that, without being too offensive, would clearly express what I thought of Biscoe and of every other gull who had flapped down to gobble up the stale food which Mr. Benjamin Harper had flung to them. I was glad to think that he had immediately recognized in me a person who would require something more tempting. I understood now why he had refused to consider my presence at the interview.

Biscoe did not give me time to find the word I was searching for.

"You're wrong, Marsham, in supposing that I was entirely convinced by his story. I candidly admit that I was prepared for a suggestion about some

money being paid in advance, and I was ready in that case to chuck the whole business. I should have been sorry to do so, but not even the prospect of leaving the Museum forever is going to make me do anything silly. However, Harper does not want a penny in advance. All he asks is a note for £500 pounds payable three months after the day of sailing, and a check for £200 payable on the day we sail, and of course the usual banker's reference. The £200 is really equivalent to the fare out, and I really don't think it is excessive. We are to sail from London to Madeira or the Canaries, and from there to the Cape Verde Islands. Then across the Atlantic to Pernambuco down the coast of South America to Buenos Aires and on south, through the Straits of Magellan. Then up the coast of Chile to Valparaiso. From there we shall sail direct to the island."

"Well, let us take the voyage for granted up to that point. The route is so far no novelty in seafaring. Suppose when you reach this island you dislike it? Suppose the bungalows built of a fragrant native wood don't exist? Suppose the grateful king and his tract of virgin territory are a myth? What then?"

"Why, then," said Biscoe, "I suppose one would return home by the next steamer and cable to stop payment on the note. But what object could there be for such an elaborate swindle? It wouldn't pay a man to charter a yacht merely to take a dozen or so people out to the Pacific at £200 a head."

This sounded reasonable, and I could not at the moment imagine what Mr. Harper's game was. I felt sure that there was a catch somewhere, but I could not detect it.

"I don't think Harper expects to make a great deal of money, but the idea of a primitive community appeals to him, and with the help of his financial

friend he confidently expects to make the thing pay. At the same time he admits that the profits may not be what he anticipates; but, as he says, if the worst comes to the worst, we shall be living and leading a better life than the life of London. And that is true, Marsham. I want to get out of this inferno. I don't care a damn about the ten per cent on my money. Give me the land and my money can go hang. Look at this room. Isn't it worth one's savings to get out of this?"

I could not but agree with Biscoe that to escape forever from the glare of that incandescent gas, from that mournful half-spread tablecloth, from the mahogany pine cone that was fretting the back of my head whenever I leaned back in my chair, would be worth every farthing one had laboriously gathered.

"To tell you the truth," he went on, "I don't much mind if it is a swindle. At any rate it will be an adventure."

"So much of an adventure," I agreed, "that if I were only sure we should sail at all, and if Mr. Harper would condescend to read my banker's reference, I would come with you."

"He wants very much to show me the yacht early next week."

"The deuce he does!" I exclaimed. "Now I should like to see that."

"Why don't you write to him?"

But I did not care for the idea of humbling myself to a fellow like Harper, and I decided to wait for Biscoe's report upon his visit to the yacht before I took any further measures. Besides, was not Hunt going to investigate the matter?

"By the way, did Harper tell you anything about his other victims?"

"Here's the list," said Biscoe.

I took a typewritten sheet of paper and read:

The Reverend Eustace Bonney,
Mrs. Bonney,
Miss Titchener,
Rose Allen (maid),
Winifred Allen (maid),
Mr. Richard Cosway,
Mr. George Cosway,
Miss Prudence Cosway,
Mrs. Ringshaw,
Capt. Stephen Ringshaw, R. N.,
Mr. Geoffrey Ringshaw,
Miss Elaine Ovenden,
Miss Leslie Arnhoe.

"These are certainties," Biscoe explained. "I think there's room for half a dozen more adventurers."

I left Biscoe's rooms and walked back toward Westminster. Half-way up Victoria Street I ran into X——

"By Jove, it's Marsham!" he exclaimed, with that insufferable cordiality of his. "I was looking for you in the club. What luck! I wanted to know if it was all right about Monday."

"No, it's not. The fact is, I'm too busy. It's very disappointing. But I shall be packing. Yes, I'm going on a long voyage. Good-night, X——, I must run. In fact I ought to be packing now."

I rushed away from him down that gaunt canyon of a street, feeling perfectly convinced that I was willing to spend a fortune, to brave cyclones and savages, to risk murder and marooning, to be the victim of barratry, to walk the plank, to be eaten by a shark or absorbed by an octopus, to do anything rather than meet X—— ever again and be asked ever again in my life if it was all right about Monday.

CHAPTER V

THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

I HEARD nothing more from Biscoe for two or three days. In fact the next person to bring the Pacific any nearer was Hunt, who arrived one morning, while I was in my bath, so much excited that it was all he could do to refrain from shouting his news at me through the keyhole. When at last I was ready to receive him, I was wearing a Chinese dressing-gown; a gorgeous affair in which dragons of scarlet and ebony brocade pranced about a meadow of grass-green silk, upon seeing me in which Hunt declared that he felt like Sinbad.

"Like Sinbad?"

"I do, sir. I do really, sir. Upon my word, sir, I feel like Sinbad about to relate his adventures to the Caliph Haroun-al-Raschid. You'll pardon me, sir, for comparing you to the Caliph, but your appearance in that dressing-gown suggested the comparison. I've always been very quick at a comparison, sir, ever since I was a nipper. I remember that at a very early age I once compared my poor old father to a tramp. Yes, sir, I did indeed, sir; and I got jolly well spanked, too, sir, for my pains. I did, sir, upon my word I did. . . ."

"On something more tangible than your word, Hunt."

Whereupon the little tailor was bent double with that laughter of his which so much resembled the forced laughter of an amateur actor, and which yet by the volume of its energy persuaded the listener that he really was quite uncontrollably diverted.

"Ha-ha-ha! Ha-ha! Ha-ha-ha-ha-ha! That's

awfully good. By Jove, sir, that's topping. It is indeed. I only wish Hibben had heard that. I shall tell him when I get back to Savile Row. Ha-ha-ha! Hibben will have to hold his sides, sir."

Then in one moment Hunt became as ludicrously grave as just now he had been earnestly risible.

"But I was telling you, sir, why I felt like Sinbad the Sailor. It's the South Seas, sir, I've made up my mind to go myself. At least when I say that, sir, if I have your kind permission, and you wouldn't consider my presence an intrusion?"

"On the contrary, my dear Hunt, if I ever had doubts of setting out myself, the thought that you were going would at once decide me to go too. I can imagine nobody whose company on an expedition like this would afford me keener satisfaction."

"I believe you mean that, sir. By gad, sir, I believe you really do."

There were tears in Hunt's eyes. He was surveying from a mountain peak of the mind an honorable and worthy life devoted to the interests of many clients, one of whom had by this testimonial crowned with a wreath of laurel his arduous ascent.

"Yes, sir, I appreciate your remarks very much. I sincerely believe that I have always tried to do my best, sir; but a remark like that is really too kind. It has moved me very deeply, if I may be permitted to say so, sir. To tell the truth, I had been feeling a little presumptuous in joining the expedition without ascertaining your point of view in the matter first. But your very kind remark has reassured me. It has indeed, sir. I have no hesitation in saying, sir, after that very kind remark, that whatever perils we may encounter on this expedition I shall be in the thick of them. You'll find Hunt there, sir. You'll find him on the spot. You will, sir. I can promise you that, sir."

I congratulated him upon his resolution and begged to know his impression of Mr. Harper.

"That man is a blackguard, sir. I have no hesitation in saying that he is an unmitigated blackguard."

I looked surprised at this; but Hunt went on quickly: "That's what I meant just now in alluding to the perils of this expedition. I feel sure that there will be perils. With a fellow like Harper there must be perils. But what I feel is that without perils we could not really consider ourselves adventurers. That's a fine word, sir. Adventurers! I must say I should like to think that perhaps in the future a writer will sit down at his desk and begin, 'Among the adventurers was John Hunt, a tailor of Savile Row.' I think without unduly blowing my own trumpet I may claim that it would read well, sir. 'Among the adventurers was John Hunt, a tailor of Savile Row.' Yes, sir, I don't mind telling you, sir, that it gave me a good deal of gratification to see what an atrocious rascal that fellow Harper is likely to turn out."

"I confess that I had not regarded his probable character from that point of view," I said with a smile. "But do you believe that the ship is really going to sail?"

"I'm convinced of it, sir. I feel absolutely no doubt of it, sir. I've seen her."

"You've seen her?"

"I have, sir. I went down with Harper to the dock and saw her. That's what decided me. Once I had seen her there, straining like a greyhound in the leash, if I may use the expression, I could not bear the idea of Savile Row any longer. I said to Hibben when I got back, 'Hibben,' I said, 'I'm going to exchange the scissors for the dirk and cutlass.' I can assure you, sir, Hibben looked excessively alarmed when I addressed him like that, sir. I believe the donkey

thought I'd been drinking. 'Yes,' I said, 'I'm going to forsake the goose and follow the lordly albatross.' He backed away from me when I uttered these words. He did, sir, upon my word he backed a couple of yards. The albatross! What a bird! I read all about it in a poem by a Mr. Coleridge. Now he must have had a lot of imagination to write that. I was very much impressed by that poem, sir. I was really, sir. That poem took my fancy. Well, if all goes well, I may come back like the Ancient Mariner myself one of these days."

While I listened to Hunt, it was seeming imperative to enjoy the experience of beholding him at large in the Pacific. I felt that I would if necessary go down on my knees to Mr. Benjamin Harper and implore him to let me be one of his Argonauts.

"I haven't made up my mind yet if I am coming," was what I told Hunt.

"But you must, sir," he protested. "It's exactly what you require. You're more independent than I am. You know, sir, that I have never been lucky enough to marry? Still, I have my business to which I am really extremely attached. At the same time, I've been thinking for some years now that too much devotion to business cramps a man. Yes, sir, for some years now I've been feeling cramped. I was fifty last April, and I said to myself in front of the glass, 'What have you done with your life, Hunt?' And it's true, sir, when you come to think it out. What have I done? If I wait any longer, it will be too late. If this settlement turns out to be genuine, I've figured to myself that I might marry a dusky bride—yes, sir, I've gone as far as that—marry and settle down and let tailoring go, for I've saved a bit of money, sir. On the other hand, if it's all a fraud and there's no settlement and we find ourselves stranded in the Pacific, well, I'll have seen the tropics before I die, and Hibben will

have kept the business warm while I'm away, and I'll come back to the shop. But I do hope, sir, you'll make one of us. Hibben has patterns of some beautiful drills and tussors. And there's no time to lose. From what Harper told me they expect to be sailing within the fortnight. She's a fine craft. The *Octoroon!*"

I did not think that it was worth while questioning Hunt farther. He had made up his mind as firmly as Biscoe had to venture. He was prepared like Biscoe to find the whole expedition a fraud; but so long as it was an expedition and he reached the Pacific, nothing else mattered. After all, he was right. He was giving himself an extended holiday and lulling his conscience with the plea that there might after all be something in it.

"The only thing I'm sorry about," I said, "is that you're not off to search for buried treasure."

"Yes, that would be uncommonly interesting," Hunt agreed. "And yet, sir, you know, I should never have thought of going after treasure. It would have been too much like those books of adventure which I may say I'm in the habit of reading for an hour every evening after my supper. Yes, sir, my housekeeper has come in once or twice to inquire what I would like for breakfast and found me half-way up the Amazon. Yes, sir, I remember once that I was locked in a deadly embrace with a python when she broke in to ask if I'd like eggs and bacon or haddock in the morning. No, sir, if it had been treasure, I should have stayed in Savile Row. It would all have been too much like a dream. Well, sir, I won't keep you from your dressing any longer. And you'll pardon the remark I passed about feeling like Sinbad the Sailor relating his many strange adventures to the Caliph Haroun-al-Raschid?"

No sooner had Hunt left the house than I sat down

at my desk and wrote the following letter to Mr. Benjamin Harper:

194 Cowley Street, Westminster, S.W.
June 12th,

Dear Mr. Harper,

I understand from my friend, Mr. Godfrey Biscoe, that you would be prepared to talk business with me in regard to the South Seas Settlement scheme of which you are the secretary. I regret that you should have felt it incumbent upon you to take the attitude you did at our last meeting, which, if I may say so, struck me as decidedly unbusiness-like. I may add that I was instrumental in sending you another client, Mr. John Hunt, who has, I am informed, been accepted as a member of the proposed expedition. In these circumstances I assume that you will feel inclined to discuss with me the possibility of my joining your party. I do not propose to make myself at all "difficult," and I can assure you that I am more anxious for some kind of an adventure than for any guaranteed material advantage. I shall be happy to hear from you at your earliest convenience, and I should also like if possible to look over the *Octoroon*, which I understand is lying at present in a private dock in Poplar.

Yours truly,
Clive Marsham

I received an answer to this the following evening:

23 Macao Street, Poplar,
June 13th,

Dear Sir,

The office of the South Seas Settlement Company (Ltd.) at 129 Panton Street, W., is now closed in view of the speedy departure of the settlers. I am authorized by my directors to inform you that we are prepared to give you an interview even at this late hour and, if we can come to terms, to accept you as a client. The list is nominally closed, but my directors are

willing to stretch a point in your favor owing to the little misunderstanding that took place the other day, and they will be glad to give your credentials the fullest consideration. If you will call at the above address to-morrow morning, the 14th current, at noon, I will conduct you to the board of directors.

Yours faithfully,

Benjamin Harper,
Sec. S. S. S. Co. (Ltd.).

The arrival of this letter threw me into a state of mind that resembled the uncritical elation of Biscoe and Hunt, and I began to ask myself how much of my deadly judiciousness had been prompted first by an ingenuous conceit that feared ridicule, and later by mere jealousy at being refused when Biscoe was accepted. Now that there was what I was determined to make a certainty of my joining the settlers, I was as keen as any of them at playing "let's pretend," and I hailed a taxi after breakfast as boisterously as I might have hailed a ferryboat.

And what a drive it was! In my least enchanted moods I have never found it possible to resist for long the prospect of the East End which displays itself from Aldgate. It is such a prelude as Naples is to Asia. The main thoroughfares that traverse the East End are so spacious and so cheerful, and in their shops, their pavements and their people, so various. They have a bazaar-like quality, and to drive fast down Commercial Road as I drove that fine June morning would have been exhilarating even had I been going to lunch with an old university friend at some clergy house in a slum parish. But such a drive, which actually was the beginning of a romantic journey and not merely the illusion of such a beginning, was a veritable rapture of the imagination. I often find that intense excitement makes me feel double just as intoxication makes one see double. I resolve my personality into

two people, one of whom takes the credit of producing the excitement and demands continual applause from the other. Or if the excitement be caused by fear, that same self-assertive self is always telling the other that everybody will be all right. The outward expression of this is what people call "talking to oneself," and it is, I believe, considered one of the minor symptoms of insanity. Well, perhaps I was a little mad that morning. At any rate, it pleased me greatly to let one-half of myself encourage the other half with promises of forthcoming delights, and with extravagant praise of its own enterprise.

I left the taxi at the West India docks railway station and walked along the south side of the docks, any adventure, any voyage made credible by the vision of countless masts and the interlacing of amber spars against the summer sky. I seemed to be walking as the river flowed, outward. Macao Street was one of a dozen small streets, the names of which flashed upon the passer-by as they might flash from the swiftly turned pages of an atlas—Cuba Street, Tobago Street, Manilla Street, Havana Street, Malabar Street. Those names must have appealed with the eloquence of life to how many seafarers safe in the curtained parlors of these humble streets; but with what much more poignant eloquence of life the fancy of those same parlors must often have troubled the hearts of how many seafarers sailing past tropic shores, the outlandish names of which were reminding them of home.

When I had rung the bell of 23 Macao Street and while I was waiting for the door to be opened, I noticed the model of a ship in a bottle on a table in the parlor window. I remembered our Burgundy of scarcely a week ago, and I wondered why some of the deft lunatics who spent their days in modeling ships in bottles had not modeled one that would float on

a wine-dark sea of its own. I supposed that people who were able to model ships in bottles never read Homer, or surely the notion would have occurred to one of them. And then I tried to remember if I had ever met a man who had actually himself modeled one of these ships, and I could only think of a fellow years ago at Yarmouth who used to wheel about an unhappy seal in a coster's barrow, in which a puddle of stale sea-water splashed drearily to and fro. I recalled how, when the public was tired of looking at his seal, he used to produce a ship in a bottle from an oilskin bag attached to one of the handles of the barrow and send round a cigar-box for pennies to reward his handiwork. Ships in bottles? I hoped that the *Octoroon* would be something more than that.

I was not given an opportunity of seeing the inside of 23 Macao Street, because at that moment the door was opened by Mr. Harper himself with many suave apologies for keeping me waiting on the steps like that.

"You must excuse me, Mr. Marsham. But I couldn't find my walking-stick for the moment, and—well, shall we go straight round to have our chat with the directors? I fixed on my lowly apartments as a meeting-place, because I thought you might have some little difficulty in finding Maritime Terrace."

Mr. Harper talked away sententiously about the quaint old nooks and corners that were still to be found in London; but I did not pay much attention to him as we walked along, because I wished for silence in those quiet streets that circumambulated the great skyey spaces of the docks or were overshadowed by the cliffs of huge storehouses rising above the wharves. I did not desire Mr. Harper's unctuous comments, for I could hear the distant hooting of tugs and the shouts of stevedores carried so tenderly over the water that

even their coarsest oaths had a strange and poetic remoteness like the oaths of an old play.

Maritime Terrace, which we reached after turning I do not know how many corners, stood by a dock-end and looked out down the river. It was really a large Georgian house become a terrace by the process of inserting two additional front doors, and, I suppose, making the necessary partitions inside. Probably it had had formerly an official existence connected with the Excise, or it may have been the abode of some rich merchant. Whatever authorities were responsible for that kind of convenience had affixed a black and white street sign to the corner to proclaim that it was Maritime Terrace, E. But over the original front door a slab of stone was engraved *Maritime Houfe,* and this remained like an epitaph of the dead. In front stretched an open space where the tufts of grass and small weeds growing in the gravel showed how slight was the traffic, and this neglected and forgotten promenade, this faded marina, was rounded off and guarded from the waters of the river and the dock-head by a semicircle of posts, black and slippery as eels, that were linked with a festoon of rusty chains.

We entered by the third of the new doors and passed up a narrow staircase (a very mean affair beside what I imagined the dignified central staircase would have been) to an airy room with a large bay-window overhanging the river. I described it involuntarily as an airy room because that is the main impression it has left on my mind, as I remember the look out on one side to an ocean of blue sky and on the other side to the vast docks over which hung a mighty fleet of clouds southward bound with every sail set. As a matter of fact the room itself was covered with dust and grime, against which the spacious outlook would have contended in vain if the windows had not been wide open to the warm June morning.

There was only one occupant of the room, a clean-shaven man of fresh complexion with close curly hair, who rose hastily from a desk in the window, and whom at first glance I took to be about twenty-five years of age. When he was near enough to shake my hand, which he did with a tremendous grip, I realized that he must be much nearer forty than twenty-five. His eyes had that look of age which one sees in old mirrors, that look as if time had faintly dulled the surface, which far more than crow's-feet or wrinkles betrays the deception of a vigorous carriage or youthful neck. My immediate judgment of Captain Hawkyard Hearne (thus was he introduced to me) was that I should probably find him entertaining and likable, but that I ought not to trust him. His accent was strange. From its timbre alone I should have said he came from southwest Ireland, but there was no support for this theory in his pronunciation, which, though it was not at all the pronunciation of what we call a gentleman and was definitely provincial, had neither a West Country burr, nor a Cockney twang, nor an East Anglian chant and certainly nothing of the North's staccato.

I could not place it at all.

"Mr. Marsham is desirous of joining our little party," said Harper with such a sinister relish in his tone that if he had been presenting me to a cannibal chief he could not have indicated more temptingly that I should cook well.

"But we're full up, aren't we, Mr. Harper?"

The other nodded.

"And it would mean one of the ship's officers giving up his cabin?" Captain Hearne went on.

The other nodded again.

"And that's a dreadful thing to have to ask anybody to do," Captain Hearne concluded.

"I'm afraid it's no use, Mr. Marsham," Harper said

with gloomy resignation. "I felt that it was no good when I gave you the appointment."

"It does seem a pity though, doesn't it, Mr. Harper?" Captain Hearne exclaimed, rubbing his chin.

"A great pity, Captain Hearne."

Each of them shook his head at the other, as if to each of them had occurred a possible solution of the difficulty which the other had as certainly shown to be impossible.

"Have a whisky and soda at any rate," Captain Hearne invited in a tone which suggested that it would provide me with a liquid subsitute for the Pacific Ocean.

I said that I never drank before lunch and tried to make up my mind to leave them. I was by now so anxious to be accepted for this expedition that I could almost have brought myself to ask humbly if something could not be managed about the cabin, if for instance I could not share a cabin with Biscoe, or even with Hunt. I think that if Hearne had been alone I would have done so; but I could not bring myself to make an appeal to Harper.

"Well, if it's too late to talk business, I had better be off," I said, turning to the door.

"And yet that seems a pity, doesn't it, Mr. Harper?"

"It does seem a great pity, Captain Hearne."

"Isn't Mr. Yellowley downstairs?"

"He ought to be by now," said Harper.

"Do you think——"

"Ah, I don't know——"

"Anyway, there's no harm in asking him, is there?" asked the Captain with almost excessive geniality.

"No, there's no harm in asking him," Harper agreed. "The only thing is will he listen?"

"Give him a good stiff whisky," Hearne advised. "Don't say anything to him at first, but let the liquor settle. I'll go and give him a hail."

Captain Hearne swung himself out of the room, and we heard his voice ring out as he called down over the banisters of the landing:

"Mr. Yellowley! Ahoy! Mr. Yellowley!"

There was an answering call in the distance.

"Come aboard, Mr. Yellowley, will you?"

As soon as the Captain shouted this invitation, or I suppose one should say command, Harper went to a closet set in the wall and took out some tumblers and a stone jar of whisky.

"Mr. Yellowley is our first officer," the Captain explained as soon as he was back in the room. "Mr. Harper and I hope that we may be able to persuade Mr. Yellowley to give up his cabin. Do you think there's any real chance of it, Mr. Harper?"

"There's an off-chance—a very off-chance," Harper said. "I never betted in my life, but if I wanted to begin betting, I'd want to begin with something a bit easier than betting that Yellowley would give up his cabin to anybody on earth."

"Yes, I allow I wouldn't bet on that," said the Captain. "And I'd bet on pretty nearly anything. Yes, I'd back a donkey to win the Derby if somebody would lay me long enough odds. But I wouldn't put a halfpenny on Yellowley's cabin."

With which utterances each of them poured out for the other the deepest whisky I have even seen. After adding scarcely as much water as there is dew in the heart of a rose at dawn they drained their glasses, and turning toward the door encouraged Mr. Yellowley to come in. While I was shaking hands, or rather while I was holding what seemed like a knotted and tarry rope's end, Mr. Yellowley fixed me with one lidless crustacean eye, and with the other he consented that the directors of the South Seas Settlement Company should pour him out a glass of whisky, the rise of the liquid in which he followed by slowly raising his

underlid, so slowly indeed that when at last it met the upper lid and indicated enough the glass was nearly brim full.

"Water?"

"A spot."

There certainly was no room for any more, and even the infusion of that spot he regarded most apprehensively, as if he feared the risk that Captain Hearne was incurring by not using a medicine dropper. The other two, with only as much regard for criticism as was implied by each of them pouring out for the other, drank a second glass as strong as, in fact if anything rather stronger than, the first.

"If it wasn't for whisky," Captain Hearne announced, "I'd give you Scotland and every —— Scotchman in it."

"That wouldn't get rid of many," Harper pointed out. "Not if I were to accept your offer and drown the lot, which I would in water."

"That's quite right," Yellowley agreed, clicking his tongue. "You'd still find 'em, wouldn't you? I've never sailed in any ship but what there wasn't a Scotchman."

"Like the poor, they're always with us," said Harper. "Yes, and just as anxious to get their hands in other people's pockets."

"You're not a Scotchman, I hope?" Hearne put in, turning to me with anxious courtesy; and when I shook my head Yellowley said that it was to be hoped I was not, because no Scotchman would part with a broken waistcoat-button if he could help it, and if he was going to give up his cabin, he hoped he was going to give it up to a gentleman who would appreciate what it meant.

Hearne flung a glance of angry contempt at Yellowley which made me perfectly sure that all this talk about cabins was only a dodge to screw a little extra money out of their clients, and I wondered if Biscoe and Hunt

had had the same comedy acted for their benefit. Yet I was so ridiculously afraid of not sailing with these rascals that I tried to play the simpleton, and did not ask, as I should have liked to ask, why without any more whisky or words they did not charge the price of Yellowley's cabin on top of the agreed fare. Then after a little more pretending, I offered a solatium of twenty guineas, which was accepted. They might have got more out of me, if Yellowley had not rehearsed the scene so often with other prospective settlers, and by his carelessness shown too apparently that it was a "job." He was then dismissed, and the rest of us took our seats in the bay of the cabin window to talk business.

"Now I daresay," Harper began, "that there are one or two questions you'd like to ask before we come to terms. Don't be afraid, Mr. Marsham. Ask us any questions you like. We want to be asked questions, do we not, Captain Hearne?"

With these words Mr. Harper managed to assume an air of such bland informativeness that while he was waiting for me to begin, his attitude reminded me of a conjurer who entreats a member of the audience to mount the stage and see for himself how utterly incapable the performer is of deception. I said that first of all I should like to know in what island the Paradise for which we were bound was situated. Mr. Harper laughed indulgently.

"I knew he'd ask that. And you knew he'd ask that, didn't you, Captain?"

Hearne laughed too, and ran his fingers through his curls with such boyish good-humor that I almost doubted if I had been right in guessing him to be as old as I had.

"And yet I suppose that, when you don't know what we know about the Pacific, it's a natural question," he said.

Harper drummed upon the table to indicate that it was too serious a question for laughter.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Marsham, but we can only tell you this. The island is in the French zone of influence."

He followed this up with the same excuse for secrecy which he had given to Biscoe, and he proposed to me the same terms identically as he had proposed to him.

"But surely," I objected, for I felt that if I did not make a show of arguing I should raise their suspicions, "surely three months allow a very small margin for the voyage out. I should have said that with the yacht you describe, an oldish vessel with only auxiliary steam, you could scarcely count on reaching the island in less than four months at the earliest."

Captain Hearne shook his head at me in playful reproach. "You've been reading those travel books," he said. "You forget that we're not going to waste our time in ports while the ladies of the party bob around in their pretty muslin dresses, and buy souvenirs. You'll find you've reached the M——" His lips came together in a labial, but he stopped himself, looked round at Harper, wrung his hand, and apologized with a grimace.

"I nearly let it out that time, eh?"

Although Harper frowned, it struck me that they wanted me to guess, as I obviously should, that the settlement was to be in the Marquesas. I remembered how Biscoe had decided that our destination was the Marquesas, and from that moment I was convinced that we should never approach that particular group.

"I suppose you haven't any photographs of Paradise?" I asked.

"Delighted to show you some," said Harper, pulling out a drawer of the desk. "We can look at them while we're waiting for Mr. Collins."

"Mr. Collins?" I echoed.

"Mr. Collins is our financial expert, and the chairman of the board of directors."

I asked if Mr. Collins would accompany the expedition, and was told that he would be looking after our interests in London.

"He will be handling our markets," Harper explained. "Mr. Collins is one of the magnates of Covent Garden."

Thinking of sopranos and ballet-dancers, I wondered how the deuce an operatic impresario fitted in with a South Seas Settlement, until I realized that, of course, it was fruit which made him influential. The photographs like all the photographs I have seen of tropical views might have been taken in the Palm House at Kew Gardens, granted the inevitable pioneer in his shirt who occupies the foreground, and illustrated a confusion of foliage in which only the banana was recognizable.

"Unfortunately we haven't a good photograph of any of the bungalows," said Harper. "But you can just see one of them in this print."

Yes, I could just see it, a diminutive dark spot in the top right-hand corner. It looked like a bug on a curtain. I was saved from expressing either enthusiasm or disappointment by the entrance of Mr. Collins, whom I perceived to be a small sallow man of such unmistakably Hebrew origin that his very long frock coat nearly gave the impression of being a gaberdine.

"Mr. Marsham is thinking of sailing south with us," said Harper, introducing me.

"Going to join the merry throng, eh? That's right, that's right. The more the merrier, that's what I always say, don't I, Captain?" said Mr. Collins, sidling up to a chair and sitting down in it with the air of one who has captured his seat from somebody else as people

do in a crowded tram or in the game called Musical Chairs.

"Mr. Marsham was asking me about the financial outlook of our little colony," said Harper.

"Quite right, too," Mr. Collins approved. "I like a man who wants to know what his money is going to do. We shouldn't be the nation we are, if we hadn't wanted to know what our money was going to do."

I wondered if he was including me in Jewry or himself in Albion.

"Well, Mr. Marsham," he went on, "I don't mind telling you, since you want to know, that the financial outlook's lovely. It's lovely, Mr. Marsham. Yes, everything in the garden's lovely, as Marie Lloyd used to sing. The idea is that everybody pools their crops, so that we start off fair and nobody can look over his garden-wall and think that his land isn't so good as his neighbor's. Of course, you'll understand I'm using 'wall' in a manner of speaking. Because, as you can imagine, there'll be no walls in our little Eden. And within limits there'll be no check on what you can grow. Within limits. What we mean by limits is that the Company will expect a little give and take from the settlers. The Company will expect to give a little expert advice, and take a little commission. Yes. But within limits you can grow what you like. Only, the results will be pooled. And if our advice is followed we calculate to see to it that you get ten per cent on your first five hundred pounds, and on any money you invest above that anything up to twenty-five or fifty per cent."

"Oh, we shall be expected to invest more than five hundred?" I asked. I began to think that perhaps this was the line along which the Company meant to profit by its dupes.

"Well, that depends on you, doesn't it?" said Col-

lins, spreading his fingers to make two deprecating fans, with which he waved away the least breath of criticism. "What we give you is a beautiful bungalow and a couple of hundred acres of virgin soil. We give you more than the Almighty gave Adam and Eve, because we do include a bungalow, and you can eat as much fruit as you like. If you wanted to develop that virgin soil to the full extent of its possibilities, you'd expect to invest a little more, wouldn't you? And I'm sure you can't say the Company isn't trustful, generous and confiding. Look what we're doing for you. £200 isn't much to charge for a journey to the Pacific on a beautiful yacht, and that's all we ask in advance. I'm sure I wish I could be going myself. But I've got to stay here and sell your produce, Mr. Marsham. I've got to be content with Margate. It's lovely bracing air at Margate, but it isn't the South Seas. Yes, £200 and a note for £500 payable at your bank three months from the date of sailing. I shall hold these notes, Mr. Marsham. It's a great responsibility for me. But I'm well known in the Market. Montague Collins, the biggest buyer of forced asparagus in Europe."

"If Mr. Marsham doubts our ability to do what we promise," Harper came in with his drums, "there's no need to waste his time as well as our own."

"Now, Mr. Harper, how quick you are!" Collins exclaimed. "Too quick, isn't he, Captain? Mr. Marsham's quite right to satisfy himself about what we intend to do for him."

We talked on for a while about details in which I was really not the least interested, for I intended to go; and it was really more to give the impression of having been persuaded of the genuineness of the enterprise, and of thereby showing myself a bigger fool than I still thought Harper was inclined to believe me that I went on asking foolish questions. The interview was brought to a close with whiskies all round, and

unwilling not to drink the health and hopes of the colony I accepted a glass. After that whisky I would have set sail on Phlegethon for the infernal regions, and I doubt very much if I should ever have noticed that the river down which I traveled was of fire.

CHAPTER VI

ABEL HEARNE

HUNT was enraptured when I told him I was going to be a member of the expedition; and he would, I believe, have danced a hornpipe there and then, had he not felt that as long as the problem of my tropical outfit remained unsolved, he was still my tailor, and as such pledged not to perpetrate a breach of decorum.

"By Jove, you are, sir? I'm confoundedly glad to hear that, sir. I am indeed! Hibben! Mr. Marsham has decided to sail with us. Where are those drills and tussores?"

"I'm exceedingly glad to hear you've made up your mind to go, sir," said Hibben. "Mr. Hunt was saying to me only just before you paid us this kind visit that if Mr. Marsham did not come he was bothered if he should enjoy the trip at all."

"That's quite right, sir," Hunt corroborated. "Those were my very words, sir. And if I may say so, your presence will give me confidence in any situation whatsoever. I went over to Earl's Court yesterday, sir, and had a look at the Kaffir Kraal in the African Exhibition. By Jove, sir, I thought as I looked at them what tough customers they would be to meet on the war-path, though of course I'm aware that the South Sea Islanders are rather different. Still, I thought a little practice with the Kaffirs wouldn't do any harm. I practised the power of the white man's eye, of which I've read in several authors. Yes, sir, I don't wish to boast, but I believe I was successful in quelling the chief. He tried to stare me out, but I persisted, and

he had to look away in the end. I'm going to the Zoo on Sunday, sir, to try the effect of the human eye on the lions. Mr. McCluskie, who is a very old customer of mine, most kindly sends me a fellow's ticket every now and then, and as luck would have it he has sent me one for next Sunday. But I mustn't waste your time chattering like this. Now, sir, you'll want a stout double-breasted blue serge, because we shan't be in the tropics all at once. Let me see, sir, I forget for the moment if you're a member of a yacht club so that we can procure the correct buttons. . . ."

Hunt continued to talk breathlessly while he took down the measurements that Hibben gave him as a precaution against any alteration in my figure since the last suit was made.

"Yes, sir. Hibben rather regrets that he isn't coming. He's going to a fancy dress skating carnival at Balham next week, and what costume do you think he has chosen? Ha-ha-ha! Upon my word, I cannot help laughing, and Hibben when he told me couldn't help laughing at himself, could you, Hibben? Yes, sir, he's going as Captain Kidd the famous pirate. Oh, dear, Oh, dear, sir. I thought I should have exploded when Hibben told me, and I really cannot refrain from repeating with your permission the little joke I made on the spur of the moment. I said, 'You'll look more like Captain Lamb than Captain Kidd.' "

At this Hibben, whose lips had been twitching like a horse's back on which a fly has settled, could keep quiet no longer and with many apologies was obliged to retire to a corner of the shop and hold his ribs with uncontrollable laughter.

"Hibben!" Hunt said severely, when he had recovered his own gravity. "We don't want to keep Mr. Marsham standing here all the afternoon."

Hibben was instantly solemn again, and the measurements were taken down without another word from

Hunt to interrupt the figures which Hibben chanted forth in a high monotone.

I should like to detain my readers with an exhaustive catalogue of what I took with me on the voyage; but I have learned from my study of travelers' tales that, though the reader fancies beforehand how much he will enjoy such a catalogue, it becomes when set down in print rather more than tiresome, either on account of its excessive display of individual taste or in its conformity to expectations.

I think that Hunt got less fun out of me than he did out of Biscoe, who, as I have already indicated, had long been accustomed to seek consolation for all his thwarted adventurousness in florid tweeds. When next I saw my friend, to whom of course I had written of my decision, but who was in such a feverish state of fussiness about his equipment that he sent me no more than a postcard with two words, *Jolly glad,* he was being fitted with a prismatic suit of khaki shot with veins of red silk, which was the very best way of warding off the sun's rays, he told me, and which was, I suppose, so perfectly prophylactic that he did not object to looking as he did like a faded dragon fly.

"Mr. Hunt favors white for you, sir," Hibben whispered to me. He was not intending the least disloyalty to a customer; but he was not going to the South Seas himself, he would be in charge of the business while Hunt was away, and he felt that the situation demanded from him a sober and decent conservatism of taste.

"You'll make a great mistake, Marsham, if you don't take my advice and get some of this Antisol khaki," Biscoe persisted.

I looked at Hibben, who frowned and warned me against Antisol with a scarcely perceptible shake of the head.

"Hibben thinks that it would be a mistake for me,"

I replied with a mischievous delight in seeing how Hunt would deal with such independence of judgment. To my great surprise he said most gravely:

"I think that Mr. Hibben may be right, sir. Yes, sir, I do, sir, indeed. I should feel very much inclined if I were you, sir, to follow Mr. Hibben's advice. I don't think you'll deny that Antisol is exactly right for Mr. Biscoe, that in fact it helps him, if I may say so without disrespect; but you, sir, should cling to white. Yes, sir, you should take your stand on white. You have the perfect manner for white, sir. But Mr. Biscoe wants color. His appearance asks for color; in white he might appear a little too irresponsible. Yes, sir, Mr. Hibben is right, I do honestly believe."

I daresay I looked very much astonished when Hunt referred to Hibben with a prefix I had never heard accorded to him since as an undergraduate I first entered the shop in Savile Row, for Hunt immediately said:

"By the way, sir, you didn't happen to cast your eye up at the name over the shop on your way in? I wonder if it would be troubling you too much to step two paces outside the door and cast your eye up at the name?"

I need hardly add that I at once complied with Hunt's request, and looking up I read, HUNT & HIBBEN between the arms of Oxford and Cambridge. I hurried back into the shop to offer my congratulations and good wishes to the partnership.

"Well, sir, I assure you, sir, there's only one combination that would give me greater delight, sir. And that would be if it read Hunt, Hunt & Hibben," the senior partner declared.

"It's a very proud day for me, sir," said Hibben warmly. "I can assure you of that, sir. And Mr. Hunt's generosity is such, sir, that he was anxious to put Hibben and Hunt, because he thought it would

read better. But I demurred to that, sir; yes, sir, I did, sir; indeed I did, sir. I demurred strongly to that. I said that I couldn't hear of it."

"However, there's one thing," said Hunt, with a deep sigh. "If I never come back, Mr. Hibben has a son, sir. In fact he has two. By Jove, he has! And one day it may read Hibben & Son, if I should go the way of all flesh."

"It will never read like that," Hibben affirmed. "Not if I was to hear in a couple of months' time that Mr. Hunt had been devoured by a man-eating shark, will his name ever be painted out. I do indeed venture to hope that one day you may read Hunt, Hibben & Hibben, sir. But so long as there is a Hibben in Savile Row, there will be a Hunt, sir. I'd sooner put false buttonholes on a cuff, sir, than be false to the name of Hunt."

During this asseveration of a loyalty which I knew was passionately genuine, poor Biscoe's fitting had been neglected, and he was now fidgeting slightly, more than ever like a faded dragon-fly, I thought, one that had been inadequately poisoned by cyanide of potassium, and come to life after being pinned to the setting-board.

"We ought to be hurrying," he said mildly. "We sail about the first of July, you know."

Hunt, chalk in hand, rushed back to attend to him; and I, thinking to myself that I had not yet seen the *Octoroon* or that cabin of Yellowley's (which, by the way, as I guessed, had been yielded in turn to Hunt and Biscoe for a consideration, I am glad to say in both cases for a higher consideration than to me), made up my mind that I would postpone the selection of mosquito-nets and medicine-chests, and pay another visit to Poplar this very afternoon.

I was given a double reason for doing this when I got home to Cowley Street, and found upon the pave-

ment outside my house, Andersen, the nostalgic Adamite, who in his sackcloth and sandals, was leaning against the area railings, having been refused admission by the maid, an object of interest to several errand-boys and of acute irritation to my next door neighbor's Sealyham terrier. He was so pathetically glad to see me, and so full of despair at having spent day after day outside the abandoned office of the Company in Panton Street, without being able apparently to deduce anything from the failure to answer his repeated rings except that a stony-hearted fate was denying him the gratification of his desire, that on an impulse I invited him into my house, sent out one of the maids for a dozen bananas, and offered if he would cut his hair and don the normal attire of a valet to take him with me in that capacity, provided that room could be found for him on board. I have already said that he reminded me of a figure in Edward Lear's *Book of Nonsense,* and there came back to me from early childhood, an old wish of mine to help that old man who said: "Well, will nobody answer this bell? I have rung day and night, till my hair has grown white, but nobody answers this bell."

That seemed to me then, and I must confess does still seem to me now, the very nadir of human desolation, the uttermost expression of deferred hope. Here was an opportunity to put into effect the vague promptings of the impracticable, but not the less profoundly felt compassion of extreme youth. Besides, as I said to myself, the very fact of sailing away to the Pacific on this expedition was already so ridiculous that no person or thing superimposed by me could possibly make it more ridiculous. It was quite as reasonable that I should engage an Adamite valet as that Biscoe should dress himself in an Antisol suit or Hunt prepare for action by quelling Kaffirs and lions with his benignant and watery blue eye. And I had not yet met the other

prospective colonists, who must be presumptively almost as eccentric as Andersen.

"You'll never have any reason to regret what you are doing for me," he vowed. "It may be that you do not believe in prayers. Many people don't believe in prayers any more. But when I get back, and go to my hut by the mountain pool in the forest and pray there for your happiness hour after hour, you will find that my prayers will be very helpful."

"To whom will you pray?"

"To God, Who will certainly listen to what I shall ask Him, because He will see that I have returned to the state of mankind before the Fall."

"And primal innocency can be regained merely by taking off one's clothes?" I asked with a smile.

"I think so," said Andersen.

He spoke with an air of such authority, yet so simply and with such majestic mildness, that I actually detected in myself a disposition to be influenced by his creed. I bade him come back and hear my news that evening, and hurried off to Poplar, half afraid that if I stayed any longer I should be proposing to the directors of the company for Andersen and myself both to travel without any clothes. I wondered what Hunt would think of my valet. If Andersen should convert him! Hunt who had devoted his life to clothes might now in his romantic and adventurous revolt against the life of Savile Row find that Nacktkultur was the very expression of it he required. And if Hunt should convert Hibben! What an end to the partnership of two tailors! And Biscoe? No, I did not think that he had a chance of converting Biscoe unless the sun could achieve something more radiant than mere tanning.

I decided that it would be tactful to call first at Macao Street and inquire if Harper was at home. It was not yet clear to me who was really the moving spirit of the enterprise, but I was quite sure that, what-

ever his position, I should do well at this stage not to give Harper the idea that I was in any way trying to go behind him. However, when the door was opened by one of those landladies who seem the natural result of knocking at the door of such a house in such a street, just as when one turns up a spadeful of soil one disturbs a generic underground life, I was told that Mr. Harper was out. I left my card as an assurance of having honestly tried to find him before I went elsewhere, and I then with some difficulty found my way through the maze of dockland to Maritime Terrace. I was no more successful here than in Macao Street, for in answer to my inquiries, a snuffling little girl with her hair screwed up to the semblance of maturity, told me that neither Mr. Harper nor Captain Hearne was at home, nor even, when I pressed her, Mr. Yellowley.

"Good heavens!" I exclaimed irritably. "But my business is very important. I *must* see somebody. Is Mr. Collins in?"

"There's no Mr. Collins lives here," said the child.

"Then who *does* live here?" I asked. "Nobody but Captain Hearne?"

"Old Mr. Hearne lives here," the child told me.

"Old Mr. Hearne?" I repeated. "Who is he?"

"Old Mr. Hearne's Captain Hearne's father," sniffed the child. "He's upstairs now."

I pressed upon her that I should see old Mr. Hearne, and it was obvious from her embarrassment that this was the first time she had ever had to cope with such a suggestion, and that in fact the notion of anybody's wanting to see old Mr. Hearne complicated her entire mental outlook. She shuffled uneasily from foot to foot.

"Mr. Hearne has his tea at five o'clock," she told me. "He'll be coming down soon to make his toast."

"It is now scarcely four, so that does not seem a specially good excuse for not running upstairs at once

like a good little girl and telling Mr. Hearne that a gentleman called Mr. Marsham would like to leave a message with him for the Captain."

She was looking anxiously at my foot as I spoke, and it occurred to me from my memory of kitchen bugbears that she was expecting me, like one of those importunate and alarming creatures of domestic legend, known as tramps, to thrust my foot forward and prevent her from closing the door. To reassure her I promised that I would wait outside while she went upstairs with my message, and I immediately turned away and walked across the stretch of weedy gravel to watch the flow of the incoming tide. Presently, on looking up to the big bay-window that overhung the river, I perceived that I was being regarded with great attention by an old man, white-bearded, and of a ruddy complexion, who as he leaned out over the sill, put me in mind of a figurehead of Neptune.

"Ahoy, there!" he said at last. "What may it be as you're wanting?"

I explained that I was sailing presently in the *Octoroon,* and that I wanted to ask an important question either of his son, the Captain, or of anybody connected with the expedition; that in view of our speedy departure, I did not want to waste my afternoon; and that I should be glad if he would give me a few minutes' conversation.

I suppose that the study of my appearance must have given him confidence, for he turned away from the window, and in a very short time the little girl was beckoning to me from the open door to come in.

I have already described the strange airiness which, in spite of its dust and grime that large bay-windowed room managed to convey. This afternoon I was even more profoundly struck by this quality, when its only occupant was this fine old man who seemed to express with his personality the atmosphere of which I was

aware; to be in fact as essential a property of the room as the captain of a battleship is a property of his own stern cabin. I felt that this old house had never been built like other houses, but that it had come in with the tide from distant seas, and that by the tide it had been left here high and dry long ago; that, if the river should rise but a little higher, it might easily happen that the house should be refloated, and that upon a fast ebb it should go down the river once more, and be steered artfully by the old man himself through the innumerable shoals and banks of the Thames estuary, back to the open sea.

I snatched myself from this dream and explained that I had come down to have a look, if possible, at the *Octoroon* and get some idea of my quarters, but chiefly because I was anxious to find out if there would be room on board for my servant, whom I was anxious to take with me.

"Well, that's a thing you'll have to ask Harry," said the old gentleman. "Harry will be able to tell you that better than what I can. And so you're going to sail south with him?"

We discussed for awhile the prospects of the voyage—the Bay of Biscay in July; coaling at St. Vincent, and where we might expect to catch the Trades, and where lose them; of Pernambuco and Bahia; of the offing we must make when we stood north along the coast of Chile. It was passing through my mind to ask the old man point-blank what really was the island for which we were bound, until I came to the conclusion that he probably did not know, or that if he did he would realize that he was being tempted to be indiscreet, and would at once become mute. I noticed, while we were talking, that his eyes continually wandered to a small lump under the edge of the threadbare carpet. Suddenly he rose from his chair and, bending down, produced a key which he waved triumphantly.

"So that's where the —— key was!" he exclaimed. The oath which came from those venerable lips took me aback for a moment until I could place it in a less tranquil setting than the present, somewhere in the roaring forties, for instance, when the icy south wind was blowing strong.

"Yes," he went on, "I might have gone all day without knowing where that —— key was, if it hadn't just happened to catch my eye while we were yarning together."

He moved across to the inset cupboard, unlocked the door, and taking out the jar of whisky set it down with a bump on the table.

"I thought you were going to have your tea at five," I said with a smile.

"Tea? Bah!"

And what that old man proposed to do with tea and tea drinkers, I am not brave enough to set down in print.

I have already described the slight proportion of water to whisky that everybody I had hitherto met in this house allowed himself; but my present host went one better than any of them, for he allowed himself no water at all.

"You'll drink with me?" he asked.

I felt that I should commit something more than a discourtesy if I refused his invitation. It seemed to me that I should betray myself as the denizen of a different element from that in which he moved, so that after my refusal there could no longer be any fellowship between us, that either he would have to gasp unintelligibly to me or that I should have to descend to his liquid medium and gurgle unintelligibly to him, whereas in whisky we might swim together in a communicative amity. I took care, however, to pour out my own portion, and add to it as much water as I wanted.

"Here's luck!" I cried.

"Drink hearty!" he responded, lifting his glass. Then he drained it, set it down, sighed, refilled it, drank again, sighed once more, and expanded:

"So you're going to the South Seas? Well, you'll see strange things there, but not so strange as what I have, and not so strange as what I hope to see again, by G——!" he shouted, banging his fist on the table so heavily that the sashes of the bay-windows rattled in response, as if the old house echoed his hope and signified a willingness to be steered by him to the achievement of it.

"You've had adventures in your life?" I asked to encourage him.

"Adventures!" he scoffed. "Young man, I could tell you of adventures I've had as 'ud make the hairs of your head stand on end like the feathers of a cockatoo and the bones in your body rattle like dice. And then when your heart was jumping around in your mouth like a rat in a pit, you'd swear I was yarning and that what I was saying wasn't true. I know you! You're all alike nowadays. I'd be just poor old mad Abel Hearne to such as you. But drink hearty, drink hearty, I'm used to it."

He found relief from the scepticism of this generation in another stinging glass, and I, not to offend him, drank with him.

"Have you ever been wrecked?" I asked.

"Wrecked!" he echoed. "Wrecked? Bah! In course I've been wrecked. Yes, cast away on one of the . . . " He stopped abruptly, and leaning across the table tapped me on the arm with a chuckle. "Yes, I reckon you'd like to know just where I was cast away. But I kep' my mouth shut, as I swore I would, for more than thirty years, and you don't think a long-nosed —— like you's going to find out in the first five minutes he sets eyes on me where I was cast away? But drink

hearty, my lad, drink hearty! There's no offense meant, and I hope none's taken. But . . . " he paused impressively and clapped a hoary old hand over his lips. "Mum's the word where I was cast away, but cast away I was in '74 with only me and my pal Harry Hawkyard and her out of all that sailed from the port of . . . " he pulled himself up again with a chuckle. "Yes, I reckon you'd like to know what port it was. But you won't, and so drink hearty, my lad, for we're the boys that make no noise," he sang in an unusually robust bass for one of his age.

"Was it long before you were rescued?" I asked.

"It was two years afore the whaler *Southern Bride* took us off. Two years it was. Two years when between me and my pal Harry there was nothing, as you might say, but the blade of a knife. Well, you've got to figure it out this way. There was me and him and the girl, and one day him and me was walking on the beach, and he says to me, 'Abel,' he says, 'you see them spouts of hot water coming out of the cliff there?' he says, for if you follow me, this island where we was cast away was nothing but a —— volcano, and perhaps you think that's telling you where the island was? But it isn't, because if you'd made as many v'yages as what I have you'd know there's hundreds of islands which is nothing but volcanoes in a manner of speaking. Krakatoa, for one, which cracked off like a squib one fine morning and blew itself half around the world. So when I tell you that spouts of hot water was coming out of the cliffs in the island where him and her and me was cast away you're no wiser, are you? 'Yes,' he says to me, 'I reckon, Abel,' he says, 'that them spouts of b'iling water,' he says, 'ain't near so hot as what you and me is for Rose.' 'Harry,' I says, 'God help me, but if it wasn't the Sabbath, I'd bash your face in for those words.' 'Would you?' he says. 'I reckon you wouldn't, then, for I've got the only —— knife on this island, and

Sabbath or no —— Sabbath,' he says, 'if you moved half a inch agin me, I'd cut your liver out,' he says. Yes, we were walking on the beach, seeing what we could pick up on a Sunday morning," the old man concluded in a note of sentimental reminiscence. "And those were the words I used to him and those were the words he used to me."

"And this was in 1874," I commented, as if by insisting on the long-past date I could make credible in this quiet, airy room that scene of hate far-away and long ago.

"Yes, that was in '74," the old man replied. "And Rose she was all for Harry. Aye, all for Harry, Rose was, and if I could tell you of the hell in which we three lived till the whaler *Southern Bride* sent a boat ashore in '76 and took Rose and me away, why I reckon as no volcano that ever was burned with such fire as Harry and Rose and me."

"Didn't Harry leave the island?" I asked.

"No, Harry stayed," he muttered.

"And you called your son after him?" I pressed. "His name is Harry Hawkyard, isn't it?"

"What are you asking me that question for?" the old man cried, clutching at the jar of whisky and clapping his hands over its lip as if in his drunkenness he recognized what was responsible for his loquacity, as if indeed it was actually the jar itself that had revealed some of his secrets and must now be muzzled against worse indiscretions.

"Only out of curiosity," I said. "Your story interested me extremely, and I naturally connected your son's name with the name of your shipmate."

"Yes, but you're asking me questions that you've no right to ask," said the old man. "Just because I've opened out a bit on account of having drunk a bit hearty, you think you'll find out something. But, b'gob, you'll see that old Abel Hearne is as close as a

clam when he thinks somebody's trying to open him out a bit too much."

"I only asked you a perfectly unnecessary question," I protested, though I knew it was waste of time arguing with a man as drunk as he was. "Your son was introduced to me as Captain Hawkyard Hearne. Of your own accord you alluded to him as Harry. You told me a story of being wrecked for two years with a shipmate called Harry Hawkyard. I might have spared myself the trouble of asking if your son was called after him, for it seems to me as clear as daylight that he was."

"But I never told you the name of the island where we was cast away. No, nor the port from which we sailed."

"You didn't, eh?" came a voice from the doorway, and looking up we saw that Captain Hearne was watching us.

I do not know how on that Sunday morning of 1874 those two eyed each other on that island beach; but I feel pretty safe in guessing that the hate which blazed forth hot as those volcanic jets in the cliffs was not more alarming than the cold and contemptuous dislike with which Captain Hearne was now regarding his father.

"There's no harm done, Harry," said the old man. "I was only telling this gentleman a few of my adventures, and we happened to drink a bit hearty, that's all."

"You'd better be off upstairs to your own room," the Captain told him harshly.

"No, I'm going downstairs to the kitchen, Harry," the old man insisted with a display of tipsy firmness. "I want to make myself a bit of toast. I was on my way downstairs to make myself a bit of toast for my tea, and I only came in here to have a look round."

"I know quite well what you came in here for. You came in here to look for the key of the cupboard, and you found it, too."

"Well, I did happen to tread on it," the old man admitted. With this he picked up his toasting-fork, which I had not noticed lying on a chair, and walked out of the room with remarkable steadiness, considering the amount of whisky he had drunk, yet disconsolately with the air, indeed, of a dejected Neptune carrying a much diminished trident.

It had passed through my mind when old Hearne was telling me about this island on which he was cast away that it might be the very island for which we were bound and that this was the reason why he had been so careful not to mention its name, nor even to give the least indication of its position by revealing the port from which the wrecked ship had sailed. When he had so anxiously assured his son that no harm had been done, I was convinced that I was right; and, since I could not remember that any of the Marquesas was actively volcanic, I was more than ever positive that we were only intended to believe in the Marquesas as our destination so far as it would keep us from asking awkward questions.

"I suppose you wanted to see me or Harper?" Hearne was inquiring with the outward form of a smile, but with such hostility in his eyes that, unless I could manage to convince him that I was still as ignorant as before, I felt that I should never be allowed to sail. Indeed, my presentiment went deeper than this, for I began to think that were I suspected of knowing our destination, my very life was not worth much, so unscrupulous would be Captain Hawkyard Hearne or Mr. Benjamin Harper if I were considered to stand the very least bit in the way of their success. It seemed the wisest course to let the Captain know exactly how much his father had told me without show-

ing any sign of fancying that it could have anything to do with the South Seas Settlement.

"I'm afraid you think I've been inquisitive, Captain Hearne, in asking your father if you were called after the shipmate with whom he was wrecked. But the romantic story interested me, and . . ." Suddenly it flashed across me that of course the real reason why the old man had objected to my question was that he had murdered his old shipmate, that his son knew this, and that after all the old man's island had nothing whatever to do with the island for which we were bound. I had stopped short in my explanation when this idea came to me.

"And what?" asked Captain Hearne.

"And, to be frank, I wondered if he had any special reason for insisting, as you must have heard when you came into the room, that he had neither told me the name of the island nor the port from which they sailed."

"What reason?"

"Well, it may sound to you ridiculous, but I was wondering if the end of their rivalry had been that one was killed by the other. If that was so, I can understand your anger at his indiscretion, but I can assure you that if I have guessed your father's secret it will, so far as I am concerned, remain a secret."

I attributed the sudden clearing of Captain Hearne's brow to relief at hearing me give this promise. His manner became once more as genial as when I met him first. He told me that there would be no difficulty about finding a berth for the servant I proposed to bring with me and laughed when I explained that it was the Nature Man whom Harper had flung out of the office. I thought it was as well, on second thoughts, not to make a secret of this, because I was afraid that even with his hair cut and himself normally dressed Harper might recognize him and object

to his going. The Captain offered to take me round at once to see the *Octoroon* and invited me to have another whisky, if his father had left any in the jar.

Yet when we were walking along to the dock where the *Octoroon* was lying, although he joked and yarned in the friendliest fashion, I had an uncomfortable conviction that if with safety to himself he could have got rid of me forever he would have done so. This feeling was so strongly in my fancy that whenever I found myself between him and the water I moved to the other side of him, and once when we were rapidly overtaking a policeman I walked more slowly, so that we might keep such protection in view a little longer. Of course, I did not really think that he would make an attempt upon my life, but I was suffering from a nervous reaction to the old man's terror when his son first appeared in the doorway of that room; I was beginning to imagine, too, that the voyage on which we were embarking had, with all its superficial comedy, elements that might well transform its character completely. I had just reached this conclusion when Captain Hearne stopped before a door in a high wooden fence labeled *No admission except on business,* took a key from his pocket, and ushered me through to behold in a small dock bounded on the landward side by high wharves the yacht *Octoroon.*

The vessel that was thus presented to me for the first time was a topsail schooner with auxiliary steam, and she must have been built, I should say, many years ago. I observed with pleasure that she did not disdain a figurehead, which to my thinking always gives one confidence in a ship, as if by assuming the form of a human being the ship acquired humanity's will to live. The figurehead of the *Octoroon* was a particularly fine one, though I should say it resembled rather a Red Indian princess than an octoroon who, in romances I have read, is always supposed to suffer from

the taint of black blood so much more deeply just because she is so completely white both in her complexion and in her sentiments.

I should like to be able to describe the yacht with a wealth of accurate detail; but I own an unfortunate habit of taking for granted such things as ships, electric-light instalations, motor-cars, railway-trains—whole factories, if it comes to that—and I have no desire to achieve the technique of accurate terminology. Even as a child I had a horror of taking a mechanical toy to pieces to see how it worked. So long as it did work, I accepted the miracle of life and was content; when it ceased to work, I threw it away.

Captain Hearne was evidently much amused by my close examination and subsequent criticism of the figurehead, which to him was much the least important part of the ship—a mere piece of decoration, in fact—whereas to me it was the face which revealed the character of the whole. I would as soon, in writing of a human being, try to describe him by his internal organs as try to describe the *Octoroon* by the myriad complicated parts that went to make her. The only thing I remember, from the information Captain Hearne lavished upon me, was that her length overall was one hundred and fifty feet, that her beam was twenty-six, and that her mizzen mast was not stepped so far below the deck as either the foremast or the mainmast.

"We have had to make four staterooms out of the forward saloon," he told me, "because we were a bit cramped for passenger accommodation."

"Which is going to be my cabin?" I asked. "It was Yellowley's, you remember," I added slyly.

"As a matter of fact," he said, "if you take my advice, you won't have Yellowley's cabin, but share one of the new forward staterooms with that excitable friend of yours in glasses."

"And obtain a refund from Yellowley?" I asked.

"Ah, I won't promise that."

In the end I followed Captain Hearne's advice; and Biscoe and I were really very comfortable in an airy stateroom on the starboard side.

We went up on deck again and, while Hearne discussed some matter with the ship's watchman, I returned to my contemplation of the figurehead.

"The only really satisfactory use to which sculpture has ever been put," I said to myself.

This befeathered and befurred female, with massive breast strained to defy the wind, this swarthy creature colored like a popinjay, staring at the great sky, the sea-green dome of Greenwich Observatory and the smoky blight over Canning Town, filled me with confidence; and although I did not know the history of the ship, nor on what seas nor with what cargoes she had sailed, I felt that she was an honest ship, and that if temporarily she might have fallen into the hands of queer customers, this grave-eyed, gaudily attired female would somehow act as the talisman of our fortunes and give us safely back to home.

CHAPTER VII

SOME SHIPMATES IN THE "OCTOROON"

I WAS glad to find that Andersen, in spite of his prejudice against clothes, looked like turning into a really serviceable imitation of a well-trained valet; in fact, with his beard shaved off, his hair cut, and dressed in an inconspicuous dark suit, he gave an impression of being a Swedish masseur, which was as much of the appropriate demeanor as I had any right to expect and was quite enough to tinge with deliberation and commonsense the superficial absurdity of engaging him.

"By Jove, you've got the right man there, sir," Hibben assured me. "Mr. Hunt was saying last night, sir, when he came back from being inoculated. 'Mr. Hibben,' he said, 'I'm bothered if Mr. Marsham hasn't found the very man he wanted.' He was telling Mr. Hunt how he lived entirely on bananas, and Mr. Hunt was exceedingly impressed, sir. He was really, sir. He told me he was amazed to see biceps like that produced by bananas. Well, sir, there's one thing,—he'll be easily provided for. Not like the Rajah of Quangwang, sir."

"What happened to him?"

"Why, sir, Colonel Houghton-Wyllie, who most kindly came in and gave us a very nice order last week, was telling me that he had been appointed to look after His Highness, to act as his sisserone, sir, on the occasion of him visiting Europe. Well, sir, he found to his dismay, sir, that the Rajah was only allowed to eat plovers' eggs, and he assured me that he had the very dickens of a job to procure them en route. And you

can understand that he would, sir. There was a moment in Switzerland, sir, when the Colonel could not make up the necessary number; and if by a most fortunate coincidence a tame parrot belonging to the head waiter of the hotel had not suddenly begun to lay, the Colonel said he really did not know what he should have done. The extraordinary thing was that for over fifteen years this parrot had been supposed to be a cock bird, so, as the Colonel said, it really did look like a miracle. I'm sorry to say that Mr. Hunt missed that story, sir. Yes, sir, he was down in the city buying beads."

"Buying beads?"

"For barter," Hibben gravely explained.

Soon after this conversation I was notified of our imminent departure.

On board Auxiliary Schooner Octoroon.
June 28th.

All passengers are requested to be on board the auxiliary schooner "Octoroon" now lying in the Thames off Millwall not later than half-past-two on July 2nd. All heavy luggage should be sent to Wilkins's Dock, E. on the previous day.

Benjamin Harper, Purser.

"So Harper has suffered a sea-change like the rest of us," I mused to an unfamiliar reflection in the glass that was wearing a yachting-cap with the badge of the Royal Wessex Yacht Club, an institution to which X——, as the only thing left that he could insist on my doing to gratify his solicitude, had secured my instantaneous election.

I imagine that few people will disagree with me when I claim that London provides the ideal setting for the start of an expedition like ours. Other ports are too much associated with particular destinations; from

London the world offers itself. Moreover, unless we happen to be natives of those famous ports, we miss in sailing from Liverpool or Southampton the sensation of gradually losing landmarks that are bound up with our earliest recollections. I confess that it did seem incredible, when I watched the dome of St. Paul's floating away behind us like a balloon, that if I wished I need not put a foot on land until I jumped ashore upon a coral beach of the Pacific.

"Well, there goes London," I said to Hunt, who was standing by me on the after deck of the *Octoroon* and following with his eyes the view that skated past us on either side of the river.

"Yes, sir, just as if it was being swept out of sight by a great broom."

"And I've had my last chop at Simpson's for some time," I added.

"Did you have a last chop, sir? Well, now, that really is very remarkable, because I did the same, sir. I did, upon my word, I did. Only I had two. Yes, sir, I was forced to eat Mr. Hibben's as well as my own. He had no appetite whatever when we sat down to our lunch. He'll be back in the shop by now. I leave it in capable hands, sir. Mr. Hibben is not one to let the firm down, sir."

"I expect Hibben was very much upset at your going?"

"Well, sir, I'm afraid he was rather upset. He's used to me. That's what it is, sir. Mr. Hibben is used to me, and he's got it into his head that he'll never see me again. I suppose I must have been talking a good deal this last fortnight about tropical diseases and cannibals and devilfish and hurricanes, and what with one thing and the other Mr. Hibben has got it into his head that I simply cannot escape the whole blessed lot. But he is most particularly anxious that I shouldn't catch elephantiasis. Somebody showed

him a picture of a native with a leg like a main drain and toes like beetroots, and Mr. Hibben was exceedingly worried at the idea of my swelling up like that."

"He would have been still more worried had you been the size of our fellow-passenger over there."

I nodded in the direction of a man at least six feet six inches tall who, dressed in a tail coat of blue serge and wearing a black and white checked cap with a peak as large as a jockey's, was standing by the port rail, his hands plunged deep into his pockets, his neck outthrust, his eyes fixed loweringly over the waste of Plumstead flats.

"I've managed to find out who that is, sir," Hunt informed me. "That is Mr. Maxwell Jauncey. He has delusions, sir. Yes, sir, he thinks that he is unable to keep faithful to his wife, suffers acutely in consequence from melancholia, and was formerly in the Royal Horse Guards Blue. I took the liberty of making a little joke about him, sir, really more to cheer up Mr. Hibben than anything else, because I make it a rule never to jest about a man's misfortunes. Yes, sir, I said, 'I suppose as he was once in the Blues, he's still in the blues.' But Mr. Hibben was so much in the blues himself, sir, that he scarcely smiled."

I asked Hunt who had given him all this gossip about Jauncey.

"Why, Mr. Harper, sir. He mentioned it in case any of the passengers should be apprehensive. It seems that Mr. Jauncey's melancholia is quite harmless. It takes a harmless form, sir. It consists of walking up and down—if you'll look round, sir, you'll see he's walking up and down now—and jingling a lot of pennies which he keeps in his pockets for the purpose. It appears that they remind him of the jingling of his accouterments when he was in the Horse Guards. It is considered by his friends that this voyage may do him good. He took it into his head a year or two ago

that he could only live in hydropathic establishments, and as he would walk up and down the corridors all night long, there's now not a hydro in Great Britain that will take him in. This made him so melancholy that his friends persuaded him to come with us. And I think our expedition is quite likely to cure him. Anyway, I'm sure we'll all do our best to make life look a little brighter for the poor fellow. By the way, sir, are you comfortably situated downstairs?"

I told Hunt that on second thoughts I had decided to share a stateroom with Biscoe, who at that moment appeared in the saloon hatchway where he stood blinking round him for a moment on the companion before he emerged on deck dressed in a suit of sky-blue ratteen. No doubt it was my expression of amazement that led Hunt to explain in a low hurried voice:

"It was against my advice, sir. It was indeed, sir, and Mr. Hibben felt even more strongly about it than I did, sir. Mr. Hibben did a thing which he's never done before in his life, sir. He refused to cut out the trousers. It was most unfortunate that we had the material in stock, sir. It was procured to line a blanket-coat for a customer of ours at the University. But he had a bereavement, sir, and was obliged to cancel the order. And when Mr. Biscoe saw the material, he pounced upon it. He did, sir, upon my word, he pounced upon it like a hawk. I should have warned you about it, sir. It was remiss of me not to have warned you. And really, sir, it looks even brighter than I feared."

Biscoe joined us aft without a trace of self-consciousness.

"I've just been below and changed," he announced.

"I could have guessed that, Biscoe," I laughed. "Your blue suit will be very good for Mr. Jauncey, won't it, Hunt?"

But Hunt felt too dreadfully responsible for the suit

to joke about it. I think that if he could have injected *Filaria* into Biscoe and induced elephantiasis, he would have done so, so that, when Biscoe's legs swelled, he could have assured him that it was impossible to expand the trousers and that the suit was useless. Poor Hunt, it must have been the fear of being publicly reported on board to be the author of that suit which gave him courage to say to us:

"Gentlemen, I have for some time been desirous of asking if you would keep my profession a secret on board. It is not that I am in the least ashamed of it, gentlemen. I am not. I am proud of it. But on an expedition such as ours I should not like to feel handicapped by it. I do not want to be regarded as a sedentary individual. I wish to take my share of whatever labors, hardships, or dangers we may be called upon to face. I have gone so far as to promise Mr. Harper an honorarium—a substantial honorarium—if I reach the Pacific without its leaking out that I am a tailor. I should feel a bit upset if my profession were made a joke, if for instance I were nicknamed Sinbad the Tailor. I hope, gentlemen, that you will not despise what must seem to you a cowardly, snobbish, and presumptuous ambition. I can swear it is nothing like that. It really is not, gentlemen. As soon as I have won my spurs, I shall be the first to proclaim what I am. Let me only come to grips with a shark or a cannibal, and I shall be proud of being known as John Hunt the tailor. Meanwhile, I have put it around, gentlemen, that I am a retired stock-breeder; and I hope, I do very much hope, that you won't give me away or despise me for pretending to have bred stock, when the only thing I ever bred in my life was guinea-pigs, and that was forty years ago."

Biscoe and I assured Hunt that we considered his little legend perfectly justifiable, and I did sincerely think that it was. After all, was not I, by donning

the buttons and badge of the Royal Wessex Yacht Club, implying that I was much more nautical than I actually was, and did Biscoe by putting on that suit of sky-blue ratteen by any means intend to convey that, before he came on board the *Octoroon,* he had been assistant-curator of a geological museum? Did he not wish to imply that he was a man capable of anything? And was not Miss Titchener (to whom you have not yet been introduced) justified in believing that he had climbed farther than anybody dead or alive down the crater of Etna, for thither in shipboard legend Biscoe's pursuit of geology was presently rumored to have taken him? We were, I maintain, bound to let it be supposed that we were all desperate fellows and potential heroes. It was a kindness we owed to the ladies of the party, who I am sure slept the sounder in their bunks in consequence. Anyway, if I had boasted that I had crossed the Atlantic in a canoe, or if Biscoe had sworn that he had reached the veritable center of the earth, or if Hunt had put it about that he was a lion-tamer, bull-fighter, and a snake-charmer in addition to being a stock-breeder, our claims to admiration would have seemed mild in comparison with those put forward by another shipmate.

This was Mr. Herbert Newton, who was, without any exception, the biggest liar I have ever met. Even Miss Titchener thought that perhaps sometimes Mr. Newton did magnify things a little bit, although, as the good soul hastened to add, she was sure it was only because he wanted to be pleasant and to make his stories interesting. I may as well admit here that I did not immediately recognize Newton for a liar. In fact I temporarily believed a story he told us the very first night over coffee about having quelled a savage mastiff with a stick with which four years previously he had scratched the back of a hyena in the Amsterdam Zoo.

Newton was a lanky fellow with hair cut short as the fur of a mole on a peaked opinionated head and always dressed with an elaborate untidiness to which with facetious dismay he loved to draw everybody's attention. I am positive that on one occasion he deliberately cut a square patch out of the seat of his trousers, just for the pleasure of shocking Miss Titchener with his unconventionality in wearing any old clothes. There was not much difficulty in this, for that most amiable of creatures would have been shocked by the moulting of a canary. Newton claimed to have done so many things, tried so many professions, and visited so many places, none of which he had obviously either done or tried or visited, that we sometimes wondered if he had ever been out of London. However, I fancy that when he was about nineteen (he was now something over thirty) he may have visited British Columbia, as he swore he had, in connection with his father's business. At any rate B.C. was his main boast and so consistently from his most extravagant lies did he come back to B.C. that I really do think he must have been there in the flesh. How we grew to hate B.C. on board the *Octoroon,* and how delighted we were when Captain Hearne once said:

"Never mind about B.C., Mr. Newton. On board this ship we're in A.D."

We thought how really wittily this was said, simply because we disliked Newton. British Columbia, as we came to think of it, was a theatrical agglomeration of mountains, in the valleys between which dozens of Newtons spent their time making jokes in a rasping accent about poor old England, in picking apples as large as footballs, and in being very proud of sitting down to dinner in their shirt-sleeves. I used to be a great admirer of Mr. Rudyard Kipling till I met Newton and found that his writings had provided him with theology, philosophy, psychology, geography, history

and science. Newton attributed everything to Kipling, even familiar texts from the Bible, much to the annoyance of the Reverend Eustace Bonney, our parson adventurer. But it was Cosway who disliked him most. It was Cosway who once said to him in his nervous little drawl:

"It was deuced lucky, Newton, that your distinguished namesake didn't live in—ah—British Columbia among the—ah—Newton pippins."

"Damn pity he didn't," said Newton, sucking his pipe as if he were the only person who had ever smoked a pipe or knew the way a pipe ought to be smoked.

"I don't agree with you," said Cosway, "for we should certainly have been without the Law of Gravitation if he had lived there."

"Why?"

"Because if the Newton pippins are as large as you say they are in British Columbia, he would never have survived that bump on the head long enough to produce anything except his last will and testament. The apple would have killed him."

"Ah, you got that out of Kipling," said Newton with a knowing smile.

"I did nothing of the kind."

"Well, I remember reading something very like that in Kipling," Newton argued.

"O God! O Montreal!" Cosway groaned.

"Montreal isn't in B.C.," Newton contradicted, tapping his pipe on one of Cosway's waistcoat buttons.

"Thanks, Newton, I did just know that. I was quoting from Samuel Butler's apostrophe on Montreal's treatment of the discobolus. It was pushed out of sight, you may remember, into a room where a man was stuffing owls. Montreal considered it improper, and Samuel Butler couldn't quite bear that."

"Kipling's Samuel Butler?"

"No, nor Kipling's butler," Cosway snapped.

But Newton did not mind Cosway's disgust; he thrust his hands deep in his trousers pockets and, offering us the spectacle of the most aggressive rump I have ever seen, he went off, singing at the top of his voice some lines about its being twenty thousand miles or leagues to somebody's little isle where the trumpet orchids blew.

"Well, they won't blow as loud as Newton, however far away they are," said Cosway.

I liked Cosway as well as any of the adventurers. He was about the last man in the world I should have expected to find embarked on an enterprise like ours; and the reason he gave me for being embarked upon it and for bringing with him his two children, George and Prudence, was most remarkable.

"It was like this," he told me, while we were pacing the deck together on a gratefully warm and calm moony night off Ushant, a night of good omen for the Bay of Biscay. "I simply could not stand the responsibility of housekeeping after my poor wife's death. We were married very young. I'm not yet forty. You would have thought I was older than that? Housekeeping has aged me, that and the endless anxiety of bringing up the children. My wife was fifteen years older than I was."

He was silent for a minute or two, nor did I interrupt him, but walked on beside him, thinking how large was the proportion of happy marriages I had known where the woman was much older than the man, speculating as I had speculated before why this should be so, and deciding once more that, when a woman could attract a young man enough to make him brave the conventional misgivings of his friends by marrying her the attraction must have been more than usually strong.

"I was absolutely lost without her," Cosway went on. "When she died, it was like losing an adored

wife and a beloved mother at the same time. I was only twenty-one when we married. We had plenty of money, and she kept house perfectly. The children were beautifully brought up. Marvelously brought up! You wouldn't say so now, would you?"

"Oh, I don't know," I replied, perhaps a little doubtfully. "They're awfully jolly kids, anyway."

"Oh, they're jolly enough," Cosway agreed. "But they got into the habit of treating me like an elder brother when my wife was alive, which didn't matter then, because she knew how to keep them in order and procure me a modicum of respect. But now they treat me more like a younger brother."

"If I had children I should like that," I said.

"Yes, if you hadn't got to manage a large house, which I assure you is the most ghastly business imaginable and occupied so much of my time that I couldn't think about anything else. The result was the children rode roughshod over me and from treating me as a younger brother they began to treat me as a pet monkey."

"But a good housekeeper for the house," I pointed out, "and school for the children would surely have solved the problems."

"Good housekeepers are only granted to human beings, my dear Marsham, by the exceptional favor of heaven. In my wife I was given one supremely good housekeeper. Such gifts are not conceded twice in a lifetime to one man. Since she died, I have lived like those kings in fairy stories whose lands are laid desolate and whose subjects are eaten daily by ferocious dragons. I have been tormented by harpies, by hydras and by griffins. The chimera, which you will remember had the head of a lion, the body of a goat, and the tail of a serpent, would have appeared like a toy lamb beside some of my housekeepers. And school for children! Marsham, do you really think that school

solves the problems of a widower with two children? Do you know that George imported no less than seventeen of his friends to my house last Easter?"

"Not at once?"

"Not absolutely all at once, but there were never less than nine young ruffians at a time throughout the holidays. The Thirty Years' War was a quiet round game compared with my life last Easter. As for Prudence—ah, that name!"

"Why, I think it's a charming name," I told him.

"It is a charming name. It has a sentimental bouquet, a sweet old-fashioned fragrance like pinks in a garden. I can see myself now standing by the font and listening with sublime complacency when the child's godmother announced it to the clergyman. And this Kate Greenaway child, aged thirteen years and one month, was sent back to me a month ago under the escort of the elocution mistress. At least I imagine that it must have been the elocution mistress. No other woman's throat could have borne the strain of recounting that child's misdeeds to an humiliated father. Yes, Prudence had had to be sent away from school because she had been detected in the exchange of amorous notes with the butcher's boy."

"Couldn't you have called in the help of that godmother?" I suggested.

"A godmother, Marsham, is a creature who takes upon herself a series of solemn obligations and fulfils them by presenting the innocent victim of her confident morality with a silver mug. With this cynical present, the kind of gift a bad fairy might be expected to confer at a christening, the godmother departs forever from the scene. If I had summoned Prudence's godmother to my aid, she would probably have sent *me* a silver mug, and I should have deserved it."

"So your solution of the problem is to take the children to this unknown island?"

I looked at the dapper little man walking with quick steps beside me, looked at his shirt-front gleaming in the moonlight (he dressed for dinner every night in what Newton alluded to with contemptuous hilarity as a "boiled shirt," and once, when in a particularly backwoodland mood as a "white bosom"), sniffed the odor of his unexceptionable cigar, and shook my head.

"No, I'm not so mad as you think me," he said. "George has convinced me that he prefers the companionship of savages. I shall give him savages. Prudence, at the age of thirteen years and one month, indulges in a passionate intrigue with a butcher's boy. A complete change of air seems indicated. And civilization has suffered so much from Rousseau that I should like to offer it something worse than Rousseau. A civilization that listened to Rousseau deserves as much. But let's forget that obscene little worm. Let's take the experiment less seriously. Look back to your own childhood, Marsham, and admit how tremendously you would have enjoyed our adventure."

"Oh, they'll enjoy themselves right enough," I admitted. "But is it good for them?"

"Do we know when we grow up what is good for children?" Cosway asked. "I doubt it, and I don't intend to learn from that fellow in Vienna. What's his name? Freud?"

"Yes, it's all very well to take up an agnostic attitude about education, but . . . however," I broke off, "I don't think it's their education that makes me hesitate, Cosway. I think it's the doubt I have about this particular enterprise. After all, we don't know where we are going. Anything may be in store for us."

Cosway waved his hand.

"Nothing but a swindle, a simple and perfectly ordinary swindle. I anticipate that. I am not such a fool as you might fancy from this conversation. I do not

genuinely suppose that we are likely to catch a glimpse of this island, let alone settle down upon it."

"But there might be danger," I ventured.

"If you had had to deal with the hairbreadth escapes of George and Prudence during the last year, you would smile at the word danger being used in connection with them. We, who are approaching middle age, may cherish an illusion that we are having an exciting time. They will regard it as a tight-rope walker who had crossed Niagara might regard driving over Westminster Bridge in an omnibus."

Our conversation was interrupted by the appearance of the children themselves, George, a good-looking boy of fourteen, and Prudence, a slim and pretty child with frizzy fawn-colored hair.

"Prudence, I thought I had forbidden you to smoke," her faither said.

"Well, Dickybird, you're smoking," she gravely remonstrated.

"She's smoking a Brazilian," George volunteered, as if that were sufficient explanation of his sister's disobedience. He spoke in such a muffled voice that his father asked him what on earth he was eating.

"I'm not eating anything," he declared indignantly; "I'm chewing."

"I strongly object to the smell of chewing-gum in our cabin," said his father.

"Chewing-gum!" George scoffed. "You don't suppose I'd chew that mucky stuff? I'm chewing tobacco. Dick Duffy gave me a quid. Prudence is going to try to-morrow. That's why she's smoking Brazilians to-night. She's practising."

Cosway snatched his daughter's cigarette out of her mouth and threw it overboard. Whereupon she snatched away her father's cigar and threw that overboard, at which George was convulsed with laughter.

"Good Lord!" he exclaimed in consternation. "I've swallowed the plug!"

"I'm delighted to hear it," said his father. "And I hope you will suffer acutely in consequence."

"I don't care if I do," said George.

"He doesn't care a bit," Prudence echoed.

"And I wasn't sick, like you were, off Dungeness," George added.

"No," Prudence corroborated with intense scorn. "He didn't even feel sick."

"Now that you have vilely disgraced yourselves in front of Mr. Marsham, you had better both go to bed."

I felt that Cosway's retort was feeble, and I was not astonished to hear him defied.

"We're going up in the foretop," George announced.

"With Dick Duffy," added his sister.

"I do not know where the foretop is, but . . ." Cosway began.

"Coo!" interjected his son.

"Fancy not knowing that!" added Prudence.

"But wherever it is," Cosway went on, "you are not going there to-night."

"But we want to see if we can spot the Ushant light," said George firmly.

"The only light you will spot to-night," replied his father, "is the light in your cabins, and if in ten minutes I don't find you both in bed . . ."

"In bed!" Prudence jeered. "Fancy calling a bunk a bed!"

"If I don't find you both in bed," repeated their father, "as soon as we get to Madeira you will be put on board a Union-Castle liner and packed off home."

George and Prudence looked at each other; then they looked at me to judge from my attitude the seriousness of their father's threat. Cosway plucked my coat to enlist my help. I felt rather a fool under the

gaze of those four earnest young eyes, but I did my best to plead the advantages likely to accrue from a policy of obedience, and to my great surprise after a minute's hesitation they surrendered.

"Good-night, Dickybird," said Prudence. "Sorry I buzzed your cigar overboard."

"By the way, George," his father called after him, "you'd better take the bottom bunk to-night and stay there until the fate of that tobacco is decided."

"He thinks I'm going to cat," we heard George tell his sister as they retired. "It'll be a jolly good suck for him if I don't."

A moment later we heard their shrill voices forward shouting:

"Duffy! Dick Duffy! We can't come up in the foretop to-night."

"My governor's in rather a wax," George explained.

"Frightfully shirty," Prudence supplemented.

Their father turned to me with a look of relief.

"I'm glad I thought of that threat of sending them home from Madeira. It seemed to implant in their minds something very like apprehensiveness."

"Yes, with that," I said, "you ought to be able to keep them well in hand for the next few days."

Cosway was called away to make up a four at bridge, and I, thankful that the only card game I knew how to play was beggar-my-neighbor, which nobody else ever wanted to play, was left alone with the peace of that warm July moonlight to meditate upon the fantastic set of people by whom I was surrounded on board the *Octoroon*.

CHAPTER VIII

MORE SHIPMATES IN THE "OCTOROON"

AT dinner on the evening of our departure I looked round the table at my prospective shipmates for many weeks and amused myself with trying to decide whether the Captain or the Purser, who were the only members of the ship's company that messed in the saloon, had the richer collection of human nature at his half of the table.

On the Captain's right sat Mrs. Ringshaw, and I remember that when I first saw her I thought what a suitable wife she would have made for King Lear, with her gray disordered locks and her wild light blue eyes. She was a gaunt, big-framed, beaky-nosed old lady, one of those women who seem intended to have only male children, and who by having only male children achieve for themselves an appearance of ruggedness and with increasing age a masculinity that sets them apart from other women as the tree that grows in the teeth of the wind is early gnarled and takes to itself a covering of gray lichen which makes it seem old and hoary while it is yet in its prime. I heard (probably from Miss Titchener who sat next me at dinner) that Mrs. Ringshaw was the mother of four sons and that having been left a widow soon after the birth of her youngest she had had a hard struggle to provide for and educate these children. One son had died of enteric fever during the Boer War; another was never mentioned. We gossips on board supposed that he had disgraced himself in some way; perhaps we accepted this uncharitable theory on account of the behavior of the youngest son,

Geoffrey, who from the time we sailed was a devotee of the bottle. He was a pleasant enough fellow when he was sober, but quarrelsome and sulky when he was not. His mother always used to pretend that his manner was the result not of too much whisky, but of an illness from which he had suffered when he was in Burma where he had once had a job in a teak-forest. Out of regard for Stephen, the other son, rather than for the feelings of the old lady herself, who was inclined to be overbearing, we used to make a show of believing this tale, although when none of the family was present we used to wonder among ourselves how Mrs. Ringshaw could be so foolish as to encourage Geoffrey's bad habits by bringing him on this long voyage as a preliminary to planting him for the rest of his life on a tropical island, which more than anywhere else would be likely to cultivate his taste for drink. I suppose we talked like this because we were a small party thrown together in a small ship and in consequence became very much what is called a family party. We felt that we had a right to criticize each other in the same way that relations feel that they are at liberty to say about each other what is not permitted to outsiders. We liked to prescribe among ourselves all sorts of better alternatives for Geoffrey, who was a shrunken, almost a wizened replica of his mother and who looked as much older than twenty-eight as his eldest brother, for all his suffering, looked younger than thirty-eight.

Captain Stephen Ringshaw was the wreck of as fine a man as I have ever seen, and I could not help feeling some resentment against his mother for exposing him to the hazards of this voyage. His history was a sad one. After a brilliant career in the Navy he had been promoted to the rank of post-captain and given the command of a light cruiser, on his first voyage in which he was, after a series of heavy gales in the North At-

lantic, struck down by paralysis when his ship was entering Halifax. Here he lay in the hospital for many weeks and hence he was finally brought back to England, a hopeless invalid (not that he would by any means admit his case to be hopeless) frustrated of what he had justifiably expected would be the highest advancement his profession could bring him. His was a cruel paralysis by which one complete half of his organism had been affected so that he had lost not merely the use of his limbs on the right side, but also of that half of his brain which directed them. Since his stroke, he had regained as much of the use of his legs as would let him walk with an insecurity that was most painful to watch, and he was learning again one by one those words which had been recorded on the afflicted side of his brain. But he was still often at a loss for the simplest word in the simplest sentence, and even phrases and words he could remember were frequently so much slurred as to be unintelligible. He was an extremely handsome man with a dauntless bearing that his affliction was impotent to cow. In his prime he must have taken much pleasure in being very gallant with women, and it was truly pitiable to see him wrestling with his infirmity when he wished to spring forward to open a door, or to pull up a deck-chair, or to offer an arm to any of the ladies of our party. He was a great optimist, and though he would suffer the torments of humiliation when he could not recapture a familiar word, if by any chance the following day he found that it was fixed anew in his brain, he would talk confidently of being his old self by the end of the voyage. But he would suffer dreadful setbacks. I can see him now shaking his fist at the sea, because he actually could not name that element which he had so deeply loved and which now in his adversity betrayed and mocked him.

"Damn. Damn. I don't think its name," he said

to me, who was standing with him leaning over the weather rails.

I was fool enough not to realize what he was struggling to give a name to and tried him with all sorts of marine birds and fish until at last I mentioned by chance what was eluding him.

"Yes, yes. Good. Sea. Sea. Piece of blow coming. Sea will do."

The words "will do" were poor Ringshaw's resource when he wished to express his ideas about the future, with which his injured brain was entirely incapable of dealing. Like a child he could only grapple at all clearly with the actual present. Half of his past was obliterated, and what remained in its grotesque incompletion must have haunted him like a half-remembered dream; and those two words "will do" were made to express heaven knows how many fair hopes, how many fine schemes. He was of course incapable of giving his own idea of our prospects on the island, although he would listen with the greatest attention when the subject was being discussed, and by insisting upon the daily improvement in his health he showed us how confidently he looked forward to getting better in such surroundings. Later on, I began to think that I had been wrong in resenting his exposure to the hazards of this voyage. No doubt, staggering with his rickety gait along the sea-front of some English watering-place, he would have felt much less hopeful of his ultimate cure and I began to believe his mother was right in the steps she had taken to help him.

On the left of Captain Hearne sat Miss Elaine Ovenden. I hesitate for a moment between the definite and the indefinite article, but I think that, inasmuch as I had never heard of Miss Ovenden until she was pointed out to me that first night on board the *Octoroon,* I am right in choosing the latter and calling her *a* novelist. Miss Titchener certainly did, when

she pointed her out to me, though I think that dear Miss Titchener was using the indefinite article rather with as much implied criticism of the avocation as an unbigoted Quaker might infer of an actress than with the least idea of thereby postulating Miss Ovenden's comparative notoriety, or perhaps, since I am speaking of her artistic reputation, I should say celebrity. Miss Ovenden may be described as voluptuous. Yes, I feel sure that voluptuous labels her correctly, even if I personally would as lief label a cornflour-mold voluptuous. I thoroughly disliked her the moment I beheld her, and when I got to know her better my dislike turned to hate. I grew to hate her so much that I should have been delighted to see her fall in love with Newton and get married to him at the first opportunity. Unfortunately Newton's taste for Kipling ruled him out in Miss Ovenden's eyes, whose choice of poetry followed the laws of fashion as strictly as did her choice of clothes. She not only preferred the latest to the greatest, but in everything she had the most infallible taste for the *faux bon* of any woman I have met, which is saying much. She was too conceited to have a trace of humor or to admit that she paid the least attention to what anybody else said or thought or felt or wrote. She used to boast that she liked to discover things for herself; and the fact of her discovering anything was held to confer renown upon the discovery. Thus, if she bought anything, saw anything, heard anything, owned anything, liked anything, read anything, ate anything, drank anything, that thing was by the application to its existence of her own personality mysteriously enhanced in value. Her cabin on the *Octoroon* was the nicest cabin in the whole ship, not because it really was, but because she nightly snored in it, as I am sure that she did, such a silly little nose had she.

Similarly, the friend that accompanied her, Miss

Arnhoe (an unhealthy creature in my opinion) was the most wonderful woman in the world. The only things of which she did not brag were her own books, and about them she affected an odiously self-conscious modesty, because, I suppose, she could not compel people to read them as she could compel them to listen to her voice or look at her ankles. She boasted of having no religion, or, to put it more accurately, she boasted of her paganism, which she seemed to imagine was some kind of positive creed. I think that she was under a delusion that no one had realized the magic of the sea before herself, and as for the sun, she talked so much about sun-worship that . . . but I shall become incoherent if I go on.

The most annoying thing of all was that nobody on board except Cosway and myself grasped what a maddening woman she was. Biscoe, for instance, found her "tremendously keen"; Hunt confided in me that he thought her "a queenly woman." Bonney, our parson, took her paganism seriously and tried to convert her; Newton proclaimed her to be "a white man's mate," and, notwithstanding her condemnation of Kipling, "a woman with no nonsense about her!" She had joined this expedition, because she declared that it was useless for a writer to approach a subject except from the inside, and she did feel so much that nobody as yet had really done the South Seas. Finally, I have to complain that Miss Ovenden sang to us relentlessly, implacably, unappeasibly. Cosway and I used to sit and with all the psychic forces of our being will her to stop, but she was as insensible as a piano in another house.

Leslie Arnhoe, her friend, was tall, dark, and angular. When she smiled, which was very seldom, she looked like a horse that has been pulled up with a jerk. She had long vicious fingers that were continuously taking the attitude of vipers about to strike. She

was, I think, very much more intelligent than her friend, but I had no real opportunity of judging, for she disliked men and would scarcely trouble to recognize our existence. Yes, she was an unhealthy creature and was evidently on board not for the sake of adventure, but because she could not bear to leave her friend.

The Captain's half of the table consisted of the Ringshaws, Miss Ovenden, Miss Arnhoe, Newton, and the two Cosway children. The Purser had on his right Mr. and Mrs. Bonney, Biscoe, and Cosway, and on his left Miss Titchener, myself, Hunt, and Jauncey.

We fell into an argument at our end of the table the very first evening over the eternal question of missionaries. Harper, who was, as I have mentioned, an ex-missionary himself, maintained to Bonney that if any missionaries were any good they were the Wesleyans, but that all missionaries were useless and bad. Bonney, on his side, wanted to argue that missionaries were only bad when they were Wesleyans or Roman Catholics, but that wherever Anglican missions were established all was well.

"I think religious arguments are such a mistake," Miss Titchener whispered to me. "And I am always telling my brother-in-law so."

I agreed with her, and added that they were very boring into the bargain.

"Oh, I don't think one quite ought to say that," said Miss Titchener. "I don't think we ought to say that anything connected with religion is exactly boring. But I must admit I do dislike these arguments. My brother-in-law is getting so annoyed. You can always tell when he's annoyed, because he gets a pink spot on each cheek."

I looked at Mr. Bonney who, before the mention of pink spots, I should have considered a singularly colorless little man, and I thought what a complicated and

violent force it must be that could kindle the cheeks of such an one. I thought how completely religion might at any moment destroy a man's perspective, and how by what one must consider superficially to be a purely irrational opinion, it might drive him into a mode of life, a system of behavior, and a habit of thought of which, before religion seized him, one would have imagined him entirely incapable. Here was Bonney, for instance, a perfect type of cup-and-saucer curate now glowing like a volcano, and launched on this mad enterprise from an ambition to spread Anglicanism in a part of the Pacific where at present the natives were either Wesleyans or Roman Catholics or Seventh Day Adventists or Mormons. For this absurd scheme to grow bananas and coconuts on an island, the very name of which he did not know, he had resigned a comfortable living and pledged his private estate, and at the dictation of a dream had snatched from the peace of a country parish not only his wife, but his wife's sister and two English maids. It was not remarkable that Miss Titchener's face should wear an expression of perpetual surprise. It seemed to me that with such a brother-in-law she was unlikely to lose that expression as long as she lived.

"Fantastic, isn't it?" I whispered to Hunt, who was sitting on my left. He had asked me before dinner if I had any objection to his taking that place, because he was feeling shy of meeting, if he might be permitted to say so, on terms of equality so many new people. But I do not think that Hunt had the least idea that any of us was fantastic. He was away on a dream of his own, and prepared to meet within it anything from an Anglican missionary to such a mythical figure as Jauncey, sitting huge and morose in a bodeful silence opposite.

"What's that I hear about missionaries?" cried Miss Ovenden brightly from the other end of the table. "I

must warn everybody that I am a pagan. Paganism is my creed. I want to get back to Nature."

I looked anxiously at Andersen, who at Harper's suggestion was acting as second steward. I had already been wondering what would be the effect upon him of Miss Ovenden's abundant décolleté, and I half expected that when he heard this declaration of what I should prefer to call her proclivities rather than her creed, he would disappear from the saloon and bring in the next course in the uniform of a declared Adamite.

"Quite right," Newton beamed. "The only thing I worship is Nature."

I was perfectly sure that in another minute this conversation would be too much for Andersen.

"What I say is let those who like going to church go to church; but in my opinion a man gets nearer to the heart of things on a lonely mountain top than in any church. I remember when I was standing on the top of Chimborazo once . . ."

We were all of us novices to Newton's unscrupulous methods of illustrating his arguments, and we looked at him with considerable respect when he handed us this reminiscence.

"Yes," he went on, "I stood on the top of Chimborazo and thought what a pity it was that some of those people who spend their lives wrangling about religion could not see what I saw."

"What did you see?" growled Jauncey, who, towering above the rest of us at table and rumbling forth this question, looked rather like Chimborazo himself.

"Most alarming, I'm sure," Miss Titchener whispered to me.

"It was such a splendid view," said Newton lamely.

"I know! I can *so* understand that," said Miss Ovenden. "I have always thought what a wonderful view one does get on the top of a mountain."

This was the moment Miss Titchener informed me that Miss Ovenden was a novelist, and when I caught Cosway's eye opposite, I knew that he and I had both resolved in that instant never to open one of her books.

I saw Mrs. Bonney pat her husband's arm as if she would assure him that he had held his own in the argument and should now be thinking about getting on with his dinner.

Mrs. Bonney was a plumper edition of her sister and lacked her look of perpetual surprise. She was outwardly a placid and kindly creature, but I fancied that she must have had a good deal of character, because I had already noticed that she was the only person on board who seemed likely to keep Prudence Cosway in any kind of order.

When we went on deck after dinner and saw with relief that our rounding of the Nore was going to be accomplished with a calm sea, Bonney took me aside and apologized for having involved us in a religious argument at dinner.

"But it is a subject on which I feel very strongly," he said.

"And quite right that you should," I put in.

"Particularly about religion in the South Seas. My grandfather was a chaplain in Australia years ago. My mother was wrecked on one of the voyages back, and by the mercy of God saved. Ever since I was a child I have wished to fulfil a vow she made to repay if possible the kindness with which she was treated by some natives. Other and more urgent calls have always seemed until now to stand between me and the fulfilment of this vow, but at last the moment presented itself, and that is why you find me on board this ship."

So here was still another, the back of whose mind had all his life been occupied by an unfulfilled aspiration. Was I not being more and more abundantly justified every hour of this voyage in my theory that

most people were fundamentally eccentric? Had somebody presently confided in me that he had set out on this expedition to find Cinderella's glass slipper or Aladdin's lamp I should not have been taken aback.

But for what hidden purpose of their own had Hearne and Harper traded upon the secret ambitions of romantic human nature? What hopes did they cherish? What object did they seek? I found a good deal of satisfaction in supposing that I should find out some day, and it struck me as strange that none of my fellow adventurers seemed to worry about this riddle, for I should have expected to find others who had been actuated as much by curiosity as anything else.

Even when we had crossed the Bay of Biscay and were leaving Portugal astern with the prospect of making Funchal in a couple of days, I had still heard not a word of speculation upon the ultimate object of the promoters of this voyage. Cosway had casually alluded to it as a swindle without seeming to care if it really was a swindle, but I could never get him to formulate more particularly the kind of swindle of which he fancied we should be the victims. I concluded that they were all afraid of waking from a dream into which after years of waiting they had managed to project themselves. They would not talk about the island, because in their hearts they did not believe that the island existed, and if they had once openly admitted their incredulity they would no longer have felt comfortable in going on with the game. I concluded that everybody was waiting for his neighbor to wake up first, and if ever I attempted to bring the conversation round to speculation upon our future I noticed a rising resentment as if, like Alice in Wonderland, I was going suddenly to tell them that they were only a pack of cards. They all passionately desired to remain in their dream. Cosway hoped to find within it household ease and amenable children; Captain Ringshaw health;

Jauncey happiness; Miss Ovenden the way "to really do" the South Seas; Miss Arnhoe the way to keep her friend unmarried; Hunt and Biscoe adventure; Newton a solid background to countless lies in the future; Geoffrey Ringshaw a place where he could drink without reproach; the Reverend Eustace Bonney an aureole. They were all of them anxious to do figuratively what Andersen intended to do literally: that is, strip themselves naked.

However, in spite of the indifference of my fellows to what became of us all, an indifference which I venture to think would soon have been changed to apprehensiveness if the weather had not remained so magically fine, because there is nothing like seasickness to cast a profound gloom over one's view of the future, I continued to puzzle out with myself the object of the promoters. A more intimate acquaintance with Captain Hawkyard Hearne and Mr. Benjamin Harper did nothing to change my first impression of them as a pair of rascals; and I never sat down to a meal at which they were both present but I felt like one of a flock of sheep that the two of them were prodding and appraising and deciding which to kill, which to sell, and which to graze another season.

Yet, this emotion of mine about them had nothing more tangible to work upon now than when I met them first in London. I never saw Harper reveal the violence of his under nature as plainly as he revealed it on the first occasion I visited his office with Biscoe. I never saw the Captain look so diabolical as he had looked that afternoon in Maritime Terrace when he found his father and me together. The two of them did not walk about and converse in low whispers like the ruffians in a fairy tale; but perhaps the time was not ripe for sinister consultations, and I remembered that the Babes in the Wood found their two ruffians very pleasant company until the day was old and twi-

light was falling. "But what can they be intending?" I asked myself over and over again, and I could find no better answer than Cosway's expectation of an ordinary swindle. They would give Collins time to call in all our notes and then announce that owing to the action of the French authorities and through no fault of their own the Paradise no longer existed. We should be stranded in some port like Papeete, and they would agree to bring us home again for twice as much as they had brought us out.

But this theory had many flaws. I could not see that it was worth their while to run the danger of being prosecuted on our getting back to England for obtaining money under false pretenses when so comparatively small a profit would reward so great a risk. I turned my fancy to the possibility of our carrying a valuable cargo of contraband and of us passengers being a cover for landing arms and supplies for Moorish insurgents or the revolutionaries of some South American Republic. I came to the conclusion that this was the most likely hypothesis I had been able to put forward to myself; and then on reconsideration I decided that it had too many weak points. Would a set of people engaged in a doubtful enterprise like gun-running hamper themselves with so many witnesses? I wondered if some excuse would be found for leaving us in Funchal while the *Octoroon* discharged her cargo on the Moorish coast, and if it would be announced to us when she came back that Collins had cabled to say that the settlement scheme had collapsed. Harper and Hearne would offer to give us a passage home; our notes would be cancelled; and a proportion of our passage money refunded. We should have served their purpose to cover the real enterprise and we should have no grounds to prefer a charge of fraud. But, after all, gun-running did not require such an elaborate masquerade; moreover, I felt in my very bones that the

two protagonists had a deeper purpose, a more profound determination than the mere running of a cargo of contraband.

I turned my attention from the Captain and the Purser to the composition of the ship's company. The crew did not help my imagination much, for with the exception of a Chinese cook, a Japanese steward, and a black stewardess, it was entirely made up of Lascars. In fact, beside Hearne and Harper, and Sam Yellowley, there were only two other white men—the engineer McMorris, a little dried-up Ulsterman, and Dick Duffy, who was called boatswain, but acted as second officer and took one of the watches. He was a good-looking young fellow of about twenty-two, with fair wavy hair, and early on the voyage he fell in love with Winifred Allen, one of the sisters who were traveling with the Bonneys as their maids. She was not such a pretty girl as Rose, but she had more character. I often thought that I should like to talk to her and find out why she and Rose had agreed to venture like this into the unknown. I sounded Andersen about them; but, although they all sat down to meals together three times a day, they seemed to have made no impression on him. In fact, Andersen was so intent upon keeping his promise to me and trying to conduct himself normally that he was really rather a disappointment. I had expected more from him; but I suppose that his dream was too serious to be trifled with, for he hoped to regain Paradise: the rest of us had not yet found it. It was Miss Titchener, my always faithful gossip, who enlightened me about the presence of the two girls on such a voyage when she and I were drinking our mid-morning coffee together *à la turque,* a habit to which I introduced her and to which she attached great importance as a foretaste of tropical customs.

"I'm afraid that very nice young sailor is falling hopelessly in love with Winifred," said Miss Titchener.

"Hopelessly?" I queried.

"Oh, yes," Miss Titchener assured me. "Winifred has taken a vow never to marry. I was very much against it when I heard of it, but Eustace, my brother-in-law, reproved me and said that nobody had any right to oppose a vocation."

"But is the act of not marrying a vocation in itself?" I asked.

Miss Titchener shook her finger at me and said it was very naughty of me to tease her about being an old maid.

"My dear Miss Titchener," I protested, "how could you suspect me of such a thing? I adore old maids. To whom of all our shipmates do I inevitably fly? I'm sure that our friendship has nearly created a scandal. No, what I meant was that I always understood one had a vocation for something positive, like being a nun."

"Winifred wants to be a deaconess and convert the heathen. You've no idea of that girl's religious fervor. My brother-in-law always preached his best sermons in our little church at home about missionary effort. That is really his main preoccupation. And he converted Winifred. She was quite a savage herself until he converted her. She used to smoke in the scullery, and swear when she broke a plate."

"Good gracious!"

"But when she heard the story of his vow, there was nothing for it but she must make a vow too. So I really fear it's no use for Dick Duffy to fall in love with Winifred. I can't think why he didn't choose Rose."

"Rose isn't converted?"

"No, but she has always been a very good girl, and being an orphan she felt that she ought to have Winifred to look after her."

Yes, Rose was a very pretty girl. She passed along

the deck at that moment, and I thought how well her name became her.

It was most interesting to know Winifred's secret and to be able to add her to my list of ungratified romantics. At the same time, I was rather disappointed to hear that she was unlikely to reciprocate Dick Duffy's affection. If she had, I should have felt that I could count Dick as one of us, and I must admit that I should have been glad to feel that at least one of the ship's company was definitely on our side, particularly as he acted as one of the officers, which in a ship so flagrantly under-officered as ours would have made this alliance of relatively greater importance. I attributed our shortage of officers to economy, and in connection with this shortage I must relate a queer incident which occurred to me the night before we sighted Madeira.

The weather was extremely hot, and one of the sleepers in an adjacent cabin had developed a most malignant snore. I think it must have been Jauncey, although I know that a man as small as Hunt is capable in his sleep of trumpeting like an elephant. I could not stand it any longer and just before three o'clock—I suppose I ought to say just before six bells—I snatched my rug and pillow and went up on deck. I had been leaning back in a chair and counting the stars to induce sleep until I had gradually dozed off, when I woke with a start hearing a strange voice shout an order to the man at the wheel. At least, it was a strange voice on board the *Octoroon,* though I had an impression that I had heard it before somewhere else. I was so much intrigued by this that I got up with the intention of finding out who it was, and I should no doubt have been successful in doing this if I had not walked straight into the arms of the Captain. He was evidently angry at seeing me on deck and asked me sharply if I wanted anything. I suppose I should have been wiser to tell him that I only wanted sleep, but

like a fool I told him that I had heard a voice I did not recognize giving orders and that I had wondered who it could be.

"I shouldn't wonder any more, Mr. Marsham," he said. "I shouldn't wonder or wander, if I were you."

I was nettled by his tone and said:

"If we had touched at any port since we sailed, Captain Hearne, I should have said that you had discovered how much your ship was under-officered and tried to remedy the situation."

"Listen to me," he replied quietly. "I let you sail against Harper's advice. I recommend you not to criticize me or my handling of this ship. The only strange voice you heard to-night was mine."

I realized that I had been foolish to mention my suspicions and, pretending to accept his word, I went below again and put up with Jauncey's snoring.

We had sighted Porto Santo, the most northerly of the Madeiras, at daybreak; and all the morning we glided past a coast of high steep cliffs on which the vivid vegetation hung in folds like a green velvet curtain. It was barely noon when we dropped anchor in the roadstead of Funchal. In the color and movement and thrill of land I put aside my night's experience; but nothing would convince me that I had dreamed that strange voice, nor that there was not somebody on board the *Octoroon* that we had none of us yet seen.

CHAPTER IX

ACROSS THE ATLANTIC

MY chief memory of Funchal is of Biscoe's agitation when a toboggan carried him back so precipitately after the excursion we had made to the heights above the town that he was unable to identify the flowering shrubs and creepers that appeared over the high garden walls between which we were rushing.

"Wasn't that *bigonia chrysantha?*" he would ejaculate. "Confound these fools! Why do they want to dash along at this rate? It's so tremendously difficult to identify plants when they are not in bloom unless one can . . . by Jove, I believe that was a *tacsonia*—oh, really, these fellows are the limit, you know. This is the vilest type of vehicle ever conceived by human ingenuity. No wonder the inhabitants all look like monkeys! This is just the way a monkey would think of traveling."

"Buck up in front," came two shrill voices from the *carrhino* behind us. "You are slow!"

Our conductors or drivers, I am puzzled which to call them, cast all restraint aside, and we fled past the next garden so rapidly that Biscoe had only time to gasp "one of the *justitias*" before it and all the plants it contained had vanished. He turned to glare at the Cosway children, who waved to him in the friendliest fashion.

"Those little devils behind are inciting these chaps to career along like this. I cannot imagine why Cosway makes no attempt to keep them in hand."

"But, Biscoe, we aren't in the museum," I said with a smile.

He flushed.

"You're quite right, Marsham. I haven't got to catalogue the plants of Madeira. Let's race those little terrors behind. What's the Portuguese for 'hurry up'?"

He waved his arms to urge our conductors forward; and we had the satisfaction of arriving at the bottom of the Mount quite thirty yards in front of George and Prudence.

We found Hunt in the town loaded with souvenirs and looking like a peddler.

"I've just been sending off some picture-postcards to Mr. Hibben. I have, indeed. Mr. Hibben is going to envy us our peep at Madeira. He is, by Jove, he is. What are these very fine trees under which we are walking, Mr. Biscoe?"

"*Magnolia grandiflora,*" he was informed.

"Are they, indeed? They certainly are grand. The flowers are not unlike a rather rich pudding flavored with lemon. I wonder if the local police would object to my gatherng one for Miss Ovenden? Ah, there's Mr. Newton. What have you been doing, Mr. Newton?"

"Why, I wanted to see if I couldn't walk quicker than that toy train up the mountain, and I arrived at least . . ."

Biscoe and I turned and fled, I forget whither, but I have a vague impression that it was to the English cemetery.

Everybody except myself spent the night on shore; but I remained on board in the hope of being a nuisance to the Captain and the Purser, and perhaps of impeding their plans. I am bound to add that my presence did not seem to worry them in the least. In fact, we spent a jolly evening all together. My companions

were evidently glad to be relieved of the strain of behaving themselves in front of the ladies, not to mention two children and a clergyman as well. Harper let himself go with some particularly scabrous yarns about his experiences as a missionary and vowed that he was no worse than the majority.

"But more open, Mr. Marsham, that was my fault. I was too open. What I always say is give me an open man and an open bottle, and I know where I am."

"You don't know where you are now," Hearne laughed. "You're too drunk."

"Now, Captain, I didn't expect that from you. Pass the lubricator. Thanks. Well, as I was saying, we're all human. I was too damned human, if you can follow my meaning, if you can underconstumble what I'm getting at. But, alas, I'm afraid you're both too drunk. I'm afraid I shall have to go into the matter diagrammatically, or to put it into simple English such as a baby in arms could understand, to illustrate my meaning with diagrams."

"You're hopelessly canned," said the Captain, laughing at me with rather the air of a naughty schoolboy who is watching his friend at work on a piece of mischief.

"I shall return to that point later, Captain Hearne. What I require at the moment is your undivided attention. Let us assume, which is what Euclid used to say when I was an innocent child, let us assume that this table is my Mission in the Marshall Group. Ah, you think I'm making a jest, Mr. Marsham," he said, rolling at me his globular eyes, which under the influence of the drink seemed to expand and contract like swimming jelly-fish. "But I did not say the Marsham Group. No, no, this table is my Mission in the Marshall Group. Have you got it? Right! Then let us proceed, my brethren. This bottle of Bass, which you will observe is open like me, this bottle represents me,

the Reverend Benjamin Harper, sent out to the South Seas by the London Missionary Society to convert the poor —— benighted heathen. Right! Let us proceed. This bottle of brandy, which you will observe is not open and therefore inhuman, is the Reverend William Jenkins sent out to inquire into and otherwise examine, comment upon, criticize, and determinate the behavior of the said Benjamin Harper, temporarily illustrated by this bottle of Bass. 'Brother,' says the Reverend Jenkins, turning up the whites of his eyes. 'Brother,' he says, or words to that effect, 'what are these rumors we hear concerning thee and thy wantonness, that you have put on the attire of the heathen or in other words two pandanus leaves and a collar-stud and have danced therein the ungodly dances of the Gentiles to the great scandal of the congregation?'

"Perhaps it would help you to comprehend my discourse better if I diagrammasticate the congregation. In this cruet you will behold a perfect representation of the congregation. 'Brother,' said I, 'you have rightly heard.' What was the result? I was turned out of the ministry for being open, and the Reverend William Jenkins was put in my place, and if I had the Reverend William Jenkins here instead of his diagram, I would uncork the Reverend William Jenkins just as I'm uncorking his diagram, and I'd pour out the Reverend William Jenkins just the same as I'm pouring out his diagram. It's no use expecting religion to flourish unless the Ministers of the Word are human. The old king was human. I wish I could give you a diagram of the old king. If I had a bottle of stout, I could give you a splendid diagram of old King Cole, as I used to call him."

"But that wasn't the king who gave you the land of the South Seas Settlement Company?" I asked, more to see how Hearne took my question than with any expectation of receiving a frank answer from Harper,

drunk though he was. Harper put a finger to his bulbous nose and shook his head at me.

"It's not a bit of use, Mr. Marshall-Ham or Mr. Marsham-Hall or any —— name you like to call yourself. It's not a bit of use for you to try and inquire, and otherwise examine, cross-examine, and crisscross-examine me about that. You're not the Reverend William Jenkins, and this isn't the Marshall Group except speaking diagrammatically. The first time I set eyes on you, I knew you were inquisitive. You've got a nose like a lancet. Now you drink up and look happy, or you and I are going to quarrel before ever we arrive."

And by the way he drummed upon the table I knew that I should be wise not to provoke him.

"That's all right, Mr. Harper," the Captain intervened. "It was a natural question."

I was trying to remember what I had read about the Marshall Islands and wondering if I was intended to believe that they were our own destination, while all the time the Marquesas really were. I began to feel confused, what with the drink and the atmosphere of the hot saloon. The Marshall Islands? Didn't they belong to Germany? But surely they were in Micronesia, and we should not be voyaging to them by this route. And were not the Marshall Islands a group of atolls?

"Come, drink up," the Captain urged.

But my head was aching, and I pleaded my broken sleep of last night as an excuse to go to bed. I think they must have invited Yellowley and McMorris to join them, for I heard a good deal of singing as I turned restlessly over and over in my bunk. I regretted that I had not gone ashore with the others, and I regretted it even more next day when they all arrived on board so much fresher than I for their night in the excellent hotel. I need hardly say that Miss Ovenden

had by this time managed to suppose that she had discovered Madeira.

"I can assure you, Mr. Marsham, I'm going to write and tell everybody what a perfect place it is. Such good food, and the most delightful swimming-pool just below the hotel garden. I've never enjoyed a bath so much. I felt quite like—I suppose I shall shock Mr. Bonney, but I can't help it—yes, I really felt quite like taking off my bathing-dress."

I looked round nervously to see if Andersen was in earshot. Mercifully he was not.

"Why didn't you?" I asked boldly.

"Oh, I don't know; I suppose we never really quite get rid of convention. I suppose we can't, really, being what we are. Why, there's Mr. Newton! What became of you?"

"Oh, I was practising up my diving," said Newton. "I've lost the knack of it, though. Will you believe it, but I could only stay under five minutes and forty-three seconds? I was an easy seven in my pearling days. Of course that's nothing compared with the time the professional native divers can stay under. I remember one fellow who could manage nineteen minutes. But he was a bit exhausted when he was pulled on board the lugger, I'm bound to admit."

"I should admit he was dead and make the best of a bad job," said Cosway.

"Well, you wait till you get out to the islands, Cosway. You'll have the surprise of your life when you do see the native pearl-divers."

Newton was not in the least angry with Cosway for disbelieving him. His attitude was always pity for our incredulity, if any of us ventured to suggest that he was lying; and that used to make us angry. A moment later we heard him telling Miss Titchener that two years ago he had won a milking competition in Devonshire.

We left Madeira behind us that afternoon and heard, rather to my surprise, that we were not going to put into any of the ports of the Canaries. This news disposed of my theory that we were carrying contraband for Moorish insurgents. Our next stop was St. Vincent in the Cape Verde Islands, which have always sounded so attractive to me from the days when I collected their stamps, but which when we dropped anchor in the harbor of St. Vincent turned out to be, at any rate so far as St. Vincent was concerned, black, barren, and forbidding. A vile wind of the sirocco type—I believe it is called a *harmattan*—was blowing most of the time; and when it was not blowing, violent local winds swept down the scoriac ravines and gullies of the encircling mountains and set up a nasty lop in the harbor, which made the journey to and from the shore in the ship's boats a thoroughly unpleasant business. Mercifully we only stayed long enough in St. Vincent to fill up our bunkers, and certainly there was never a more appropriate place in which to coal a ship.

When we grumbled about the weather, Captain Hearne told us that it would probably have been much more unpleasant had we been a few days later, because the season of the equatorial rains was close at hand, which would turn the whole group into a Turkish bath.

Even Hunt was discouraged by the appearance of the Cape Verde Islands and confided in me that he should say nothing about them in his next budget to Hibben, as if he felt that the existence of these islands was a kind of indiscretion into which he had unwittingly fallen and which might impair the validity of the great tropical myth that he was creating for Hibben's benefit. Miss Ovenden could find nothing in St. Vincent that would reflect any credit upon herself. George Cosway managed to play some violent game, I think it was tennis, with the genial young men of the Telegraph Company; and Mr. Bonney derived a cer-

tain amount of satisfaction from putting on his black clothes and preaching a sermon to the English community. Poor Biscoe could not find a blade of grass to give a Latin name to, and I think Jauncey was the only person who mildly enjoyed himself. He spent the whole day in promenades up and down the blistering quay, jingling the pennies in his pockets and evidently taking a gloomy delight in the surly and inhospitable landscape. But we soon forgot the disappointment of the Cape Verde Islands in the thought that every hour was bringing us nearer to crossing the line. Every one of us by now must be deep in his own dream of tropic shores.

Soon after we left St. Vincent we ran into the equatorial rains with their muggy gray skies and leaden blue sea, detestable weather which made us all irritable or depressed according to our temperaments. Then we had a clear night, and George Cosway who had by now established a post of vantage for himself in the foretop, in spite of his father's earlier victory, cried out suddenly:

"Prudence! Prudence! You can see the Southern Cross! Dick Duffy says so! Isn't it ripping!"

It struck me then, as we all hurried forward to feast our eyes on this pledge that the Southern hemisphere did really exist, that it would be amusing to know what each one of us wanted from that hemisphere, what he particularly desired to see or smell or touch or do there, and from what forgotten tale of travel or adventure this ambition had been begotten, and why. I felt sure that George Cosway would never have been so much excited by the appearance above the horizon of the Southern Cross if he had not connected it with those large Brazilian stamps (were they the first issue of the Republic or the last of the Empire?) which in black and dull shades of lilac and gray carried an utterly fantastic figure of hundreds and even thousands of

reis, so that, what between the diamonds and El Dorado and the apparently immense wealth required to post a letter there, Brazil became for me such a cave of Aladdin that even to this day one "Z" in a name scintillates like a decoration on the breast of a potentate. And in that full-rigged ship of the British Guiana stamps I circumnavigated the globe when I was young, nor have I the least doubt that if anywhere on this voyage we had spoken that ship, we should have found her decks and yards black with boys in Eton jackets. And that parrot of the Guatemala stamps which I have learned since is not a parrot at all, but a quetzal; and that portly, rather dowdy Britannia of the old Barbadoes issue, how both she and the parrot, as I must still call it, spoke of quaysides! Barbadoes and the Barbican and barbecued sucking-pigs (Long John Silver was called Barbecue) and Barbary and barquentines, barracudas, barricades and barratry, and last but by no means least barnacles, can any other first syllable conjure the sea like "bar"? Other stamps pass before my mind. There were those Chilians of many shades all imprinted Colon, why I never knew, but to this day it has made romantic for me that mark of punctuation, so that I use it fearfully as I might use a talisman. There was that solitary black swan of Western Australia which calls me now to its quiet waters; there was that exquisitely engraved profile of Queen Victoria in an early issue of the Virgin Islands; and finally, to bring this reminiscent catalogue to a close and get back to the realities of the doldrums, there was that mysterious foreign possession of Italy called Segnatasse, which like Atlantis and Armorica could not be found in any map or gazetteer, but which I placed somewhere near Senegambia and the Ivory Coast.

I proposed that everybody should write down an answer to my question, and in order to make a game of it I offered to copy out the answers and pass the

paper round for everybody to guess whose each answer was. I need hardly say that I should not have gone to all this trouble, with the thermometer at 89 degrees, if I could have extracted my information without making a game of it. However, it is useless to try to make English people take any kind of research seriously unless it is turned into a game, which makes concentration worth their while and secures from them something like sincerity.

We made a false start, because Bonney put as his chief desire the spread of Christianity, if possible under the moderate ægis of the Church of England. I argued with him for some time before he would be sensible and perceive that I was trying to get something peculiar to the tropics, not an expression of his personal aspirations as a clergyman. Even as it was, I thought his answer was much too professional; but of course I am not a clergyman, and perhaps they do feel like that even about the tropics. I give the answers in order as I took them down, and I have put the names of the people who wrote them at the end of this chapter, so that you can play our game, if you like. Cosway was the winner of the *Octoroons*. He only guessed four wrong. Geoffrey Ringshaw declined to play and announced he was going to have a game of another kind with the Captain.

1. The smell of tropical vegetation without the smell of hot-water pipes.
2. A shark attacking a native diver.
3. A shaded veranda and very quiet native servants preparing cocktails.
4. Monkeys throwing coconuts at you.
5. Fireflies.
6. To see coffee growing.
7. The English mail.
8. A church built of coral slabs.

9. The whole caboodlum again! Couldn't possibly choose anything in particular.
10. The sun. The glorious sun.
11. Hummingbirds.
12. Nothing.
13. To watch a cyclone from a safe place.
14. Paddle about in a lagoon and watch the breakers on the barrier-reef.

For myself I said that I most wanted to see a fleet of Portuguese men-of-war. And when I had written this I thought I wanted to see an albatross and a frigate-bird, and while the moments went by when the others were chewing their pencils and racking their brains to discover what they most wanted to behold, a myriorama of greatly desired objects floated across my vision, so that my brain was like a bright screen of birds and flowers and strange tumbling beasts.

Meanwhile, we steamed heavily on through the doldrums, and we were all of us beginning to wonder if it had been worth while leaving England for such an exasperation of the nerves, when the sky cleared and we caught the southeast trades. One morning while I searched the deep-blue sea for what I desired, I saw with all their rosy sails spread to catch the genial wind that fleet of Portuguese men-of-war, and I was like a child who has been granted a glimpse of fairy life. There was not one of what Biscoe called "those small cephalopods" which did not assure me that from her through millions of years I had derived the instinct to sail into the unknown as I was now sailing just for the sake of sailing.

Very early next morning, George and Prudence could be heard from the most remote cabins rushing up and down and shouting "Land-ho!" Hunt and I were the first on deck, and there, sure enough, under a pale primrose sky, flecked with countless lilac cloudlets, a

low tropic coast was visible—that authentic coast of our dreams with its long white breakers and serried palms above the yellow beach.

"It seems almost comical," said Hunt, "that at this solemn moment Mr. Hibben is lying asleep in Balham."

It was not for me to spoil Hunt's great thought by reminding him that it was considerably later than four o'clock in England.

1. Biscoe.
2. Hunt.
3. Cosway.
4. George.
5. Prudence.
6. Miss Titchener.
7. Mrs. Bonney.
8. Bonney.
9. Newton.
10. Miss Ovenden.
11. Miss Arnhoe.
12. Jauncey.
13. Mrs. Ringshaw.
14. Stephen Ringshaw.

CHAPTER X

MY ADVENTURE IN BAHIA

WE made the coast of South America some fifty miles south of Pernambuco, which I had all along understood was going to be the first point of call on the other side of the Atlantic; but it seemed that Bahia de Todos Santos was to have that distinction.

"You'll miss nothing at Pernambuco," Harper assured us at dinner. "But Bahia is what I should call a pretty place. Now wouldn't you call Bahia a pretty place, Captain Hearne?"

"Why, yes, Bahia's all right," Hearne agreed. "I daresay you've been there, Mr. Newton."

It must have cost Newton a struggle to admit that he had not, but I suppose that he was afraid of being asked to guide the party and of being chaffed by Cosway whenever he made a mistake. However, he made his negative as picturesque as possible by explaining that the reason he had never visited Bahia was that, on the two voyages he might have had an opportunity of calling at that port, there had been rumors at Pernambuco of yellow fever further south, which led the captain of the ship he was in to give it a wide berth.

We did not make so quick a passage past the three or four hundred miles of coast that lay between us and Bahia as we expected, owing to the wind's shifting to the southwest and blowing hard with much heavy rain. As far as I was concerned, I was perfectly happy to watch hour after hour the monotonous coastline of a

continent. Moreover, we did sometimes get a glimpse of dark and mighty equatorial forests behind the palm-trees along the yellow beaches fringed with foam. And sometimes we would see churches with a few scattered houses round them, usually on small eminences behind the palms, and sometimes—though I am glad to say not often—the chimney of a factory.

As I sat pondering upon this coast I remembered that it was in Bahia that Robinson Crusoe decided to brave the evil hazards of another voyage and that thence he sailed for the Guinea Coast with barter bought from the produce of successful tobacco-planting in the district. I wished that Daniel Defoe were now my shipmate in the *Octoroon* so that I might hear his opinion of Benjamin Harper and Captain Hawkyard Hearne. I felt that they were of the breed of Will Atkins; and while I watched that long coast seesaw as we pitched in the head-wind I was more than ever taken with the fancy to circumvent their plans.

It was a night of full moon toward mid-August when we dropped anchor in the great Bay of All Saints. The wind which had been blowing harder than ever from the southwest all day faded at sunset, and the moon climbed out of the ocean into a clear sky. Bahia de Todos Santos thus beheld for the first time seemed to us beyond the means of the richest poet or painter. We hung over the rail and apostrophized the scene as indescribable, incommunicable, inconceivable, incomparable, and forthwith set out to find its paragon in our literary experience among the glamourous and mythical landscapes and enchanted cities of legendary adventure. And indeed I do not think that we could be laughed at for our superlatives.

With towers of fretted ivory and domes of alabaster the houses built on the steep face of the cliff stood out blanched and crystalline in the moonlight from the groves of white-stemmed cabbage-palms and huge-

leaved tropical trees that filled the open spaces between; and above the flat summit of the cliff the rockets that were celebrating some religious festival fell in cascades of colored fire upon a city of marble. I could not help feeling, while I watched this scene, how much it reminded me of the old-fashioned prelude of a pantomime in which the demon-king and the fairy-queen contended for the fortunes of the chief characters; and when I turned round to see how my fellow-adventurers were enjoying it, I thought, too, how much our expedition did actually resemble those ridiculously ill-assorted parties that used to set out for our entertainment in pantomimes of adventure like Dick Whittington. We stayed on deck until the funicular had made its last golden ascension and descension. Then we hurried off to bed that we might be up early to explore Bahia. There comes back to me as I write these lines the scent of that night, a blend of spices and gunpowder, of bilgewater, tar, and treacle.

The next morning we were ashore as soon as the health officer gave us *pratique*. I think that even Hunt and Biscoe had all their senses catered for during the walk along the quay to the station of the funicular. The noise of quarreling negresses; the screaming and chattering of parrots and baboons for sale; the stacked-up bales of tropical produce in the warehouses that overflowed into the roadway; the acrid smell of Africans, nearly all of whom were sucking a length of sugar-cane as they walked along; the permeating insistent smell of pineapples and coffee now mingling with a warm spicy fragrance, now with the reek of garbage and rotten greenery and open cesspools; and, when we took our places in the lift to ascend to the upper town, the sickly stench of the castor-oil that was used to lubricate the machinery, combined to make the members of our party deplore that Bahia was not as wonderful by daylight as it had appeared under the moon.

I found the company of my fellows so tiresome that I escaped and went for a walk by myself in a rich suburb full of ugly rococo houses, with more statuary of nymphs and ganymedes gathered together in every garden and portico and poised on every roof and wall and parapet than I have seen elsewhere in all my travels. I make particular mention of these statues, because I attribute to their unfortunate example the spectacle that confronted me, on turning the corner into an avenue of very fine mango-trees, of my valet as naked as a plucked fowl. He was leaning against a high yellow wall and listening with an expression of grave contentment to several green and rose-colored birds which in the large gilded aviary of a garden on the other side of the avenue reiterated in a tone of weary disillusionment two notes between the quack of a duck and the caw of a rook. I fancy from inquiries I have made since of ornithologists that they were trogons. Not only was my valet stark naked; but there was no sign anywhere of his clothes. I supposed that he had fallen under the influence of last night's moon or this morning's sun, and I was half nervous of dealing with him as sternly as I felt I ought to deal with him. As for the problem of getting him back to the ship in his present condition, that really appalled me.

"Andersen, what does this outrageous behavior and gross violation of your promise signify?"

I knew that I was speaking pompously, but in moments of alarm we are apt to regard long words as defensive weapons. However, I need not have been nervous, for as soon as he heard my voice he came back to himself with a start and begged my forgiveness in such piteous accents that the trogons in their gilded aviary desisted a while from their lugubrious quawing, and with slanted heads sat watchfully silent upon their perches.

"Yes, that's all very well," I grumbled. "But where are your clothes?"

"Ah, sir, I'm afraid I threw them away."

"Where did you throw them?"

"Ah, where?" he answered with plaintive ambiguity.

"You must pull yourself together," I said severely. "You must try to remember where you put them."

"I threw them over a wall," he cried, thrusting a lean forefinger against his temple.

"Which wall? The one against which you're leaning at this moment?"

He looked up behind him.

"No, I don't think it was this one. No, it wasn't this wall."

And if it had been, I thought, we should have stood little chance of recovering the clothes, for the wall was at least fifteen feet high, without a sign of a gate.

"You've broken your word," I told him angrily. "And I have no alternative but to leave you to get out of the mess for yourself. You can't expect me to explain to the Brazee police that I have a servant who is in the habit of stripping himself naked in public thoroughfares. I'm sorry, Andersen. I gave you a chance of getting back to the Pacific, and this is the way you repay me."

I thought that the poor fool would lose his reason completely when I made a movement to turn away and abandon him. He wept and went down on his knees in the dust and clung to my legs in despair. He made such a noise that I expected every moment that the inhabitants of the great flaunting houses in the neighborhood would come hurrying out to see if a revolution had started.

"If you could only remember where you have thrown your trousers," I said.

"We can look for them, sir. We can look for them, Mr. Marsham."

"I'm not going to walk about Bahia with you in that condition, inquiring for your trousers."

I measured with my eye the height of the mangoes and was debating with myself if he could climb up and conceal himself in one of the trees until I could get back from the yacht with another suit. I shrank from the notion of giving him a leg-up to the lowest bough and racked my brains for another way out of my embarrassment.

My situation must sound completely farcical. So, no doubt, it is when set down in cold print; but if a man embarks on any kind of adventure at all out of the common, he is likely to find that his associates in that undertaking are the products of an unusual situation and as such likely to produce the confusion of eccentricity. However, the antithesis of farce is tragedy, if we adopt our modern conception of comedy, and here was I face to face with a situation that nothing but a *deus ex machina* could relieve; even now it makes me happy to think of my relief when the machine, if not the god, appeared in the shape of a sedan chair carried by two negroes, each of whom was wearing a battered top-hat, which I had already noticed as the head-dress *de rigueur* among the chairmen of Bahia.

The conveyance struck me as so utterly ludicrous that I did not feel at all abashed in hailing them, and after wrapping Andersen in my coat, I bundled him into the chair where he was quite hidden from the glances of the curious. As for myself, I boldly led the way; and if I blushed, my blushes were not noticeable under a large green umbrella, a piece of tropical equipment of which I was very proud, because none of the men on board except myself had thought of providing himself with one. I decided that we would avoid the main carriage-road cut diagonally along the cliff, and much to the chairmen's indignation insisted that they should scramble down one of the stepped

alleys which, before the carriage-road was constructed or the funicular built, had served as the only communication for nearly four hundred years between the quayside and the upper town. These alleys much resembled the narrow ways of an Italian hill town, but being shaded by magnificent palms and with waves of brilliant tropical flowers overflowing the high walls on either side, the squalor was concealed.

I fancy that I enjoyed the descent a good deal more than the chairmen did, or than Andersen himself, who at any moment, such was the inclination of the chair, might have been precipitated out through the torn and faded front curtains on the back of the leading chairman. This fellow kept turning round to swear at the man behind, because he thought that an undue weight was being put on him by his partner, though it was really the man behind who had the worst time. At one moment the argument became so fierce that I expected to see them put the sedan chair down and attack each other with the poles. However, they continued to slide and stumble down, and at last the alley became a straight flight of steps which appeared to lead straight down into the waters of the harbor. When somehow the two negroes got the chair safely down these steps without putting Andersen out, I managed to explain to them that they were to wait with their fare closely curtained up until I returned.

There were so many of these stepped alleys along the cliff that I looked round for something to mark the place of egress, and I chose a mass of rosy pea-shaped blossoms that poured in a torrent over the angle of two garden walls. Biscoe identified these for me later as *Clitoria braziliana.* I found a boat to row me out to the *Octoroon,* which was anchored under an old Dutch fort of the seventeenth century, and with the help of our Japanese steward I got together some clothes for Andersen.

This steward was a decent little fellow and incidentally an excellent barber. I rather hoped to persuade him to take service with me if we ever reached that island, though I knew he was anxious to get back to Japan. He had been given liberty for the day to go ashore and do some catering; and he offered to go back with me at once and to keep an eye on Andersen until we left Bahia. I was glad of Ito's company and delighted to be relieved of any more responsibility for that day. We landed at the praya, Ito carrying a suitcase of clothes, and hurried back, so far as it was practicable to hurry, through the surging crowd among heaped-up bales of merchandise and stacks of rare cabinet woods along the quayside, to where I had left the sedan chair. The rosy flowers of the creeper tumbled in profusion over the wall, but the sedan chair was nowhere to be seen. We climbed part of the way back up the steps of the alley, without seeing a sign of the chair, until at last we were driven to suppose that Andersen must have escaped somehow, although, since I had taken care not to pay the chairmen, I was at a loss to know how they had let him get away or, at any rate, why one of them had not waited with the chair while the other went in pursuit.

"Well, it can't be helped," I said to Ito. "The silly fellow will get locked up by the police, and he will probably finish up in the public asylum. I've done my best for him."

I was hot and tired, and I was beginning to feel that Andersen thoroughly deserved to be well punished for his behavior. Ito suggested that perhaps the chairman had moved in search of shade to one of the alleys further along the quay, and he urged me not to give up hope. Sure enough, we had not walked fifty yards, when just inside the next alley, at the corner of which stood what was proclaimed to be an English Bar, we saw the sedan chair with the two negro chairmen in

their battered silk-hats. I shook my fist at them to mark my indignation at their daring to move from where I had left them and hurried forward with Ito to give Andersen the clothes. I was on the point of drawing back the curtains of the chair when my shoulder was fiercely gripped from behind and I was lifted up and flung back with considerable force against the jamb of the doorway into the saloon.

"Will nothing cure your inquisitiveness?" demanded Captain Hearne, standing in front of me, his whole face dusky with wrathful blood. "Why the hell can't you take a warning?"

I ought to have explained my object, but I lost my temper instead and swore back at him.

"You're not on board your ship now, Captain Hearne, so stand out of my way! I've hired that sedan chair."

"Have you, indeed?" The Captain laughed with such insolence that I was minded to strike him across the mouth with my umbrella. "That's news to me." He shouted an order in Portuguese to the chairmen, who at once picked up their poles and started off at such a quick pace with their burden that in a few moments they were lost in the crowd of the quayside.

"After them, Ito!" I cried to the steward, with what was certainly a gross slight upon the Captain's authority, which he was not slow to resent and which I afterward regretted.

"Come back, you slit-eyed Chink! Who in hell would you be taking orders from? Get back on board! I'll talk to you later!"

"Mr. Harper said I could have liberty until dinnertime, sir," the Japanese protested with grave courtesy.

"You mutinous yellow dog! Would you question my orders?"

"No, sir, I will not question your orders. You are the Captain. No, sir, I will not question your orders."

Ito looked at me with an expression of such painful perplexity that I spoke up for him, although I was sure that by doing so I should not improve matters either for him or for myself.

"I asked the steward to help me with my bag. Are you suggesting, Captain Hearne, that a passenger has no right to avail himself of the steward's services when he is on shore?"

At this Hearne let himself go in a rush of filthy oaths.

"By G—d!" he raved. "Things have come to a pass when a mutinous dog of a Chink will set out to argyfy with the Captain of his ship! By —— ——, you squinting bastard, set down that truck and get to —— —— out of my sight."

"You can leave the bag with me, Ito," I told him.

The Japanese bowed, set the suitcase down, and withdrew into the crowd. As for the Captain, he spat on the ground at my feet.

"You'll pay for this, Mr. Marsham!" he vowed.

"I've paid already," was my retort, "in having to put up with the company of a swine like you for so long. Get out of your head that I'll stand much more nonsense from you, and if I hear that you've tried to vent your drunken rage on our steward, I give you my word I'll see to it that you stand on the carpet before the British consul."

With this I picked up my bag and strode off. I was in such a rage that I hardly knew which way I was going, and I must have walked a couple of hundred yards along the quayside before I realized that I was walking in the opposite direction to that taken by the chairmen with Andersen. I began to remember, with the cooling of rage, that I had not said a word to Hearne about my reason for wanting the chair, nor asked him his reason for so high-handedly ordering the chairmen off. I was on the point of turning back to

find him and clear up the misunderstanding when, looking up, I saw another mass of that creeper tumbling in a rosy torrent of blossom over the angle of two walls and a few yards up the alley another sedan chair. The chairmen recognized me immediately, and came to meet me with grins of relief and already rubbing their hands against their trousers to make them worthy of the rich reward for their services that I must be meditating.

And there was Andersen inside!

I passed the clothes through the curtains; and while I waited for him to dress, an effort which threatened to break up the sedan chair and reminded me of those convulsions inside the portable theater that used to precede the performance of Punch and Judy, I thought over the scene with Captain Hearne. Suddenly I divined with absolute certainty of being right that the reason why he had been so much enraged was that inside that other sedan chair was he whom I had heard on deck the night before we reached Madeira. How much I wished that I had been one instant quicker and had caught a glimpse of the unknown before Hearne flung me back! Yes, only a second more, and I should have solved at any rate one mystery of the *Octoroon*. I asked myself what line I should take now. Should I try to bluff Hearne into supposing that he had been too late to prevent my seeing the unknown? Or should I treat the whole matter as a drunken misunderstanding and tell the story of Andersen's escapade as a good joke to conceal my suspicions?

On consideration I decided upon the latter course. If we had been nearer home I might have chosen to act otherwise; but we were in the Western Hemisphere and south of the line. I could not help feeling that Hearne and Harper would find some excuse for refusing to take me any farther, if I pressed them too hard about this mystery; and I could not bear to contemplate that

possibility. Who could it have been that Ito nearly discovered? Was it some political exile that was being secretly landed to raise his standard and revenge himself upon his enemies? There was no sign of impending revolution in Bahia. But in Paraguay, for instance? Was not Paraguay in a continuous state of unrest with faction pitted against faction? Perhaps we had on board one who would shortly proclaim himself dictator. I began to picture that unseen figure. He would have waxed mustachios and a grizzled Vandyck beard. In my mind's eye he was something between the villain of a melodrama and the conductor of a foreign orchestra, an utterly theatrical conception that very soon became dim and unreal and disappeared in the great hinterland of improbability.

I had reached this point in my meditations when Andersen emerged from the chair, very much ashamed of himself and considerably embarrassed by the delighted applause with which the chairmen greeted him. I paid them so well that I suppose they thought me as mad as Andersen and demanded double. I am sorry to add that I gave them what they asked, for the morning's excitement coupled with the sun and the smells of Bahia had by now brought on a headache, and I was more than anxious to get back to the yacht and rest.

I had just settled down in a deck-chair and lighted a cigar, thankful to find myself alone and under no necessity to make myself polite to any of my fellow-travelers, when I heard a tremendous row going on by the gangway, from the babble of which the voices of George and Prudence Cosway rose more and more shrilly until they had outshrilled all the others who were taking part in what was evidently a fierce argument.

"Bring it on board, I tell you!" George commanded.

"And bring mine too!" screamed Prudence.

"You'll be paid all right, you silly fools!" George yelled.

I supposed that the children were having some trouble with the boat which had brought them off from the shore and, not hearing the voice of Cosway in all this hullabaloo, I got up to see if I could be of any help. I had not even reached the gangway-ladder when Prudence dashed through the open port and ran along the deck to meet me, holding what at first I thought was a muff on her outstretched arm.

"Oh, hullo, Mr. Marsham! I say, do look what I've got! Isn't he a darling?"

"Good heavens!" I exclaimed. "What a loathsome looking animal! What is it? A monkey?"

"A monkey!" she cried in scorn. "Of course not! It's a sloth. Would you like to hold it? They're always upside-down."

I leapt back in disgust.

"My dear girl, you cannot bring an unpleasant brute like that on board," I protested. "Where will you put it?"

"In the foretop," she announced.

I might have known she would choose that confounded foretop.

"Well, I don't know much about sloths," I said. "But I cannot believe that it will live with any degree of comfort in the foretop."

"Oh, yes, it will. It will live in the rigging. That's why I bought it instead of the ant-eater. I could *not* think where I could put that."

"No, I shouldn't think you could. It would puzzle even you to invent a habitat for an ant-eater on board the *Octoroon.*"

"Do you dare me to get an ant-eater?" Prudence asked, a challenge in her voice.

"Heaven forbid!" I said hurriedly. "No, I merely entreat you not to import an ant-eater."

"I do think sloths are darlings," said Prudence, becoming abruptly feminine and caressing the melancholy brute that was suspended upside-down from her arm. "And won't it be fun," she went on, "to watch him hanging on to the leech?"

"I always thought it was the leeches who did the hanging on," I said.

She withered me with a glance of contempt.

"The leech of the sail."

"Oh, great fun," I agreed. "As long as the filthy animal does hang on. If he doesn't, it will be most horrid. I'd rather a pot of paint fell on my head than a sloth."

"Sloths sleep upside-down," Prudence threw out for my instruction.

"Do they? They must snore very heavily, I should imagine. And we've already got quite enough people on board who do that. If the sloth sleeps, it's more than I shall. What will you feed it on?"

"Oh, fruit and stuff," said Prudence. "You'd better look out it doesn't scratch you. Sloths scratch like billy-oh."

"It won't scratch me," I prophesied confidently.

"It might if you touched it."

"Yes, my dear girl, precisely. That's why I venture to affirm that it will never scratch me. But what was that shindy going on just now?"

"Why, they wanted us to pay them before they gave us the animals," she complained. "But I said they'd have to wait till Dickybird turned up. So in the end George is waiting in the boat till Dickybird comes. These Brazees are beastly suspicious, aren't they?"

"How much is the bill?"

"I think it's a hundred and something thousand *reis*. It's not really a frightful lot. George's cost more than mine. Much more."

"I suppose George bought a jaguar," I said with a facetiousness for which I was well paid by the simple affirmative that fell from the lips of Prudence.

I rushed to the side and looked over. It was true. There was George sitting in the stern-sheets of the boat with not actually a jaguar, but a well-grown jaguar-cub on his knee.

"Your father will never allow him to bring that brute on board," I cried.

"I don't see what it's got to do with Dickybird," Prudence argued. "George is going to train it."

"In the foretop?" I inquired sarcastically.

"A bit," said Prudence.

"Yes, I should think it would be a bit," I responded. "A pretty large bit, too, out of George."

"Well, the poor thing must have some climbing exercise. That's why George chose a jaguar instead of a puma. Because he thought it would enjoy itself more than a puma."

"Bother the jaguar's enjoyment," I exclaimed. "What about ours? I don't see why we should go to the trouble of getting up entertainments for jaguars. Besides, it will murder and then devour your sloth."

"Oh, I never thought of that!" Prudence gasped.

Whereupon she once more suffered one of her abrupt transformations into an all-too-brief femininity and began to croon over the sloth her apprehension for a cruel fate at the paws of the jaguar.

"Poor darling! Will the cruel jaguar kill you, then? No, you shan't be killed!"

"Prudence," I begged. "Do remember that you're not grown up yet. Try to be sensible as long as you can."

"Hallo, Mr. Marsham!" George hailed me from the boat. "I say, can you spot my jaguar?"

"What do you want me to spot it for? The jaguar

can't lose its stripes any more than the leopard can lose its spots."

"Ha-ha! Very funny!" George called back. "But don't you think he's a topper?"

"A spiffer!" I agreed warmly. "What are you going to feed him on?"

"Oh, meat and stuff," said George.

"I see, Newton and Mr. Jauncey and Mr. Biscoe. Don't give him Miss Titchener, or I shall be cross."

"Ha-ha! Very funny!" George shouted.

Cosway arrived soon after this, and the jaguar was firmly vetoed; although Prudence was allowed to retain the sloth, which was considered too lazy to attack anybody if it were not teased. George then proposed that he should be allowed to buy a scarlet-faced monkey that he had seen for sale; and on this being refused, because it was very expensive and notoriously delicate, he put in for a howler-monkey, which was immediately and rightly denied him on account of the unpropitious name. Indeed, I am thankful to say that he was not allowed to have any kind of monkey and had in the end to be content with a toucan, which turned out to be a really engaging bird and bit a gobbet out of Newton's finger. The sloth vanished soon after we sailed from Bahia. Probably one of the lascars threw it overboard; but the toucan lived until it caught cold halfway between the Plate and Cape Virgin, when it died much esteemed by both passengers and crew.

That evening I invited Hunt to come and dine with me on shore. I had laughed away my headache over those absurd animals of George's and Prudence's, and I felt much inclined before I met Hearne again to make an effort to find out who the mysterious stranger was. I argued it out this way. Hearne already suspected me of interesting myself too much in the private affairs of the promoters of the expedition. I keep calling it an expedition, because that is the way the whole busi-

ness appealed to me. Not from the beginning did I ever think of it as a settlement; and, as I have mentioned already, among the prospective settlers themselves there was the greatest reluctance to discuss the details of the future they were proposing for themselves. Any allusion to communal life on that island was made apologetically in the way an honest person relates a spiritualistic experience of his own. Of course, when he tells a ghost story at second hand he is as brazen as a gong.

Well, as I was saying, I saw no reason why I should not take advantage of Hearne's suspicions by giving him something of which he really could be suspicious. It might be that the stranger had been bound for Bahia, in which case we should hear no more of him; but it might be that he had only landed secretly for his own purposes and would return on board to-night. In the former case I should do no harm by visiting that English Bar, against the doorjamb of which I had been flung by Hearne this morning; in the latter case I might catch a glimpse of the mysterious stranger, and if Hearne did not like it, why I would have it out with him in front of the others and perhaps thus induce him to show more of his hand than otherwise we were likely to see. I chose Hunt to accompany me on my evening's amusement, because I thought that it might be as well to have a witness, and I felt that Hunt, whatever luck I had with my investigations, was in any event a guarantee that I should not be bored.

We dined not very well, but well enough, at one of the hotels in the upper part of the town, and after watching one act of a most comic performance of *Il Trovatore,* I suggested that we should explore some of the drinking-saloons along the quay. The champagne at dinner and the music of Verdi were both, I fancy, floating through Hunt's brain, and if I had proposed to hire a party of guitar players to serenade a fair

Brazilian, I believe that he would have been perfectly ready to take a part.

"By Jove, Mr. Marsham, what a superb thing music is! It is indeed. I feel thoroughly roused. I do, Mr. Marsham. I feel capable of anything at this moment. Tum-tum-tum-tum! Tum-tum-tum-tum! Toodle-oodle-loodle-oodle! There are few things I should quail at doing to-night, Mr. Marsham. I feel I am living, Mr. Marsham. I do, I really do. I feel that anybody would find it excessively hard to daunt me to-night, Mr. Marsham. I am in a mood which I am not ashamed to describe as dauntless. My blood is up, Mr. Marsham. And I don't mind telling you that in case we need it I have my sword-stick ready for action. That is to say, if I can get the confounded thing to come out without sticking at the crisis. It's a splendid weapon, Mr. Marsham, if I can only get it out in time. I found no difficulty whatever before we left London in plunging it six inches into the cushions of a Metropolitan railway-carriage."

We took the funicular from the upper town to the praya. Hunt, with the tune of *Il Trovatore* echoing in his brain, wanted to walk back by one of the stepped alleys down which I had come that morning with the sedan chair; but as he was in the mood to make of every shadow cast by the moon an excuse to use his sword-stick, I was afraid we should get involved with some harmless passer-by, and I did not want to waste the evening in the company of the police.

I had no difficulty in finding the English Bar again, and we passed in, pulling aside the net curtain which hung in the open doorway presumably as a protection against flies, a most inadequate protection, too, to judge by the inside of the saloon, on the walls and ceilings of which they were packed like currants in a box.

There is a generic similarity between all such places of entertainment in whatever port they be found, and

except for the pineapples that were stacked on one side of the counter and that rum was the staple drink, not beer, we might have been in some riverside bar of Shadwell.

At the far end of the room was a platform, which two women with rice-powdered faces and short pink frocks that gave them a nightmare coquetry ascended heavily every quarter of an hour and on which they danced a breakdown to the strains of an infernal instrument of the mechanical-organ type. There was a continental billiard-table, the cloth of which was so much worn and the slate so badly cracked that the balls traveled up and down it with a noise like that of distant trains. On the wall above the table at which we seated ourselves there was a framed chromolithograph of all the crowned heads of Europe in the year 1887.

Hunt surveyed the occupants of this interior with a satisfied expression.

"Tough sea-dogs!" he ejaculated.

I looked round at the various members of the Mercantile Marine that sprawled with their elbows over the splashed and sticky tables and gazed vacuously at one another from bleared eyes.

"Drake wouldn't be out of place in this company, Mr. Marsham," he opined.

A small thick-set mariner rose and shouted to a friend who was playing billiards:

"Coming, Nobby?"

"Yes, I'm coming," the other shouted back indignantly. "But let a fellow finish his —— game first, carn't yer? 'Op it yourself if yer want to. 'Op it. But let me finish my —— game."

"Quoth Drake on Plymouth Hoe," I laughed to Hunt.

But he did not find the comparison ludicrous, and shook his head in sage agreement.

"I always feel that I ought to have gone to sea, Mr. Marsham. Why, hullo, there's Mr. Newton. Good evening, Mr. Newton! Mr. Marsham and I thought we'd study the night life of Bahia. Can I have the pleasure of offering you a little refreshment?"

Newton sat down at our table and said that this joint had changed a good deal since he was last in it.

"Not much in one day surely," I suggested. "Didn't you tell us that this was your first visit to Bahia?"

Newton shook his head and clicked his tongue.

"I keep thinking we're in Pernambuco," he exclaimed, with that expression of wry complacency he always assumed when he was hopelessly caught in an attempted lie. "But, hullo!" he went on, looking at the dancers, "I believe I've seen those two girls before somewhere."

"Very likely," I agreed; "for I've certainly seen them dozens of times in Rotterdam, Havre, Hamburg, Bordeaux, Lisbon, Marseilles, Genoa, Naples, and Alexandria."

"No, seriously," said Newton. "I really think I have. But I'm bothered if I can remember exactly where it was. We'll call them across to our table for a drink."

At this proposal Hunt gazed at Newton as Faust may have gazed at Mephistopheles, and turned to me:

"We are indeed seeing life to-night, Mr. Marsham." Then he looked at the door nervously.

"Oh, well," he said at last, "I suppose it's not likely that Mr. Bonney or any of the ladies of our party will come in here at this time of night. By mistake, of course," he added quickly.

However, Hunt was saved from a *Walpurgis-nacht* and I from the exasperation of listening to Newton's allusive gallantry by the entrance of Hearne and Yellowley. My heart began to quicken in anticipation

of a row, for I had no intention of standing any insolence from Hearne before Newton. The Captain and his first officer stood for a minute in the doorway looking round the smoky saloon. I wondered if they had an appointment here with the mysterious unknown, and I followed their glances in the hope of detecting a nod of recognition from one of the crowd. But I was not successful in this, and finally Hearne's glance rested on us with a broad smile of greeting. He said two or three words to Yellowley, patted his shoulder, and threaded his way through the tables to where we sat. Yellowley, after touching the peak of his cap to us, passed out again, the net curtain preventing my seeing if he was joined by anybody else outside.

"This is the man I want to buy a drink for," said Captain Hearne, patting me now on the shoulder and beaming good-will, before he pulled up a seat to our table and beckoned to an attendant negro. "What's it going to be?"

I told him curtly that I would not drink, and waited to see if he would refer to what had happened outside this very saloon only this morning.

"And how are Mr. Hunt and Mr. Newton?" the Captain continued. "Come along, gentlemen, the drinks are on me."

I stood up to go. I thought that if I were amiable Hearne might suppose that I was afraid of him and anxious to be conciliatory.

"Mr. Marsham," he protested, "sit down! Sit down! You can't break up a happy home like this."

By this time Hunt had risen to accompany me.

"Gentlemen, the night is young. Yellowley will have the gig waiting for me in an hour. Surely you can waste an hour yarning with me."

"I don't care much for this saloon, Captain Hearne," I told him stiffly.

"Then don't let's stay here. There's no need to stay here. No, we don't want them," he called to the barman. "Drink them yourself. How much?" He tossed him a coin.

And such was the compelling geniality of the man when he chose to exert it that within a few minutes I was laughing at one of his stories while we were waiting for the funicular railway to take us to the upper town.

"Where I'll show Mr. Newton better dancing than down in that bum saloon."

I do not think that the dancing we saw was really any better, but perhaps the girls' dresses were a little fresher.

It was after two o'clock when we set out back to the yacht. Hearne had made himself particularly pleasant to me all night, though I never felt that his joviality implied the least apology for his behavior that morning, which he merely ignored. I had tried hard to be frigid, but gradually I had found myself succumbing to his determination to include me in his good-will. No doubt the Champagne we drank helped. I have already taken an opportunity to deplore the effect of Champagne, and my own conduct that night does not incline me to take back a word of what I wrote about its effect. Burgundy, however, was not to be thought of in Bahia where, even though August was the coolest month of the year, the thermometer was over 80 degrees. Still, I think that Hearne himself deserves to share with the Champagne the credit of compelling me to spend a most amusing evening.

He really was a most entertaining rascal when he liked, not so much for what he said, though he could tell a good story, as by the droll use he made of his fantastic strength. Perhaps he was particularly anxious to impress us all with that in case of our proving troublesome to his plans. The horses of Bahia may

not be the strongest in the world, but it takes a strong man to push back a trotting horse and carriage, which was what Hearne did that night when, standing in the middle of the road and laughing at some story of his, we got in the way of the traffic. One driver shouted his warning and drove right at us. Hearne turned his head, pushed his arm into the horse's chest, stopped the conveyance, and went on with his tale. It may sound like discretion on my part, but I could not go on sulking with a man who did that in just the way Hearne did. Moreover, he silenced Newton, who spent all the time gazing at him like a well-behaved little boy.

By the time we walked back down the winding carriage-road to the harbor, I had surrendered so completely that I did not resent Hearne's taking my arm, as we went gaily along with that demoralizing, and most regrettable featherbed gait which is induced by Champagne. I suppose that I was definitely drunk. I remember that Hunt was in front with Newton, trying to explain the plot of *Il Trovatore,* a feat of exposition that would puzzle a sober university lecturer. I remember that I was conscious of being grateful for the support of Hearne's arm. I remember the sensation of the moonlit water in the harbor that seemed to be flowing, in ever widening ripples, to meet us, and then I think I can remember that a dark form sprang at me from the shadowy side of the road, and that I cried out I had been stabbed, as I collapsed on the ground insensible. I must have regained consciousness almost at once, for Hunt was still thrusting at a palm with the blade of his sword-stick; Hearne was bending over me; and I could hear Newton's running steps muffled by the thick dust he raised in pursuing my assailant toward the quayside.

"He got you in the shoulder," Hearne said, whistling softly to himself.

"No need to tell me that," I answered. And then "Hunt," I gasped. "Stand close and leave that blasted palm alone. Stand close by me! I'm going to faint. Stand close by me. Quick! or I shall be stabbed again!"

CHAPTER XI

SOUTHWARD

I WAS for several days after my mishap "quite the hero," as Miss Titchener expressed it. Even Jauncey came several times to the cabin, and like an enormous vulture with shoulders hunched high, gazed gloomily down at me, while he rattled the pennies in his pockets and prophesied mortification, gangrene, and I know not how many more complications liable to ensue from a wound such as mine. As a matter of fact, although it was extremely painful and a nasty gash to look at, it was nothing really serious; no doubt, if we had not been at sea, it would have healed much more quickly than it did; but as there is nothing like sea air for keeping a wound open, I was able to go on being a hero for some time. I resented my weakness in fainting after the first blow, and not at all inclined to excuse myself on account of the long and tiring day I had had with all its incidental excitements. Of course, I had not the slightest doubt that the assault had been planned by Hearne, although I was not convinced that he meant to have me killed. My theory was that he hoped to have me sufficiently disabled to provide him with a pretext to leave me behind in Bahia; the Brazilian doctor who was fetched to attend to me was so very insistent on the danger of my sailing with the others that I fancied he had been approached by Hearne and Harper beforehand. I daresay that he expected to make a nice little bill of charges for attendance as well. However, I swore that nothing would induce me to remain behind in his

clinic, and, with dear Mrs. Bonney revealing herself a first-class nurse, I was positive that I should be all right.

I need hardly add that Newton gave us a sensational account of his pursuit of my assailant, from which stood out only one fact that we were all ready to accept, which was that the fellow was black. For my part I was sure, though I kept quiet about my suspicions, that my assailant was one of the lascar crew of the *Octoroon,* and that he was still on board the ship. George and Prudence Cosway never did have a high opinion of Newton, and I think they expressed plainly the general criticism of the company when Prudence said:

"But you didn't catch him, did you?"

"No, I didn't, but I should have caught him easily if Mr. Hunt had followed up."

But we were not going to criticize Hunt, who frankly admitted that he completely lost his head, when I called out and he saw the dark form running away in the moonlight.

"In fact, I must confess, Mr. Marsham, though I am really ashamed to admit it, I was within an ace of attacking both you and Captain Hearne in my excitement. I was, indeed. By Jove, I was! As I told you, the blade in my sword-stick is usually very difficult to draw, but I happened to have it ready, because I had been intending at that moment to illustrate for Mr. Newton the fight in *Il Trovatore.* I think we really must have had a little too much Champagne, you know, because I got it into my head, when you called out, that you were illustrating *Il Trovatore* to Captain Hearne. But I really am very much ashamed of myself, Mr. Marsham, I am indeed. I'm afraid that Mr. Hibben is going to shake his head when he hears of the part I played. But I shall do better next time, Mr. Marsham. I'm feeling a bit of a poltroon.

Yes, I really shall do better next time. Next time you are stabbed, Mr. Marsham, I shall be there. I shall get a very strong letter about my behavior from Mr. Hibben; but it shall not occur again, Mr. Marsham. Young Mr. Cosway and I have been rehearsing for the future. Mr. Cosway senior very kindly consented to represent you, Mr. Marsham. He is lying down at the moment, but the bruise is not serious. I believe Mr. Cosway junior struck him with a belaying-pin which, as I told him, was just a little bit too realistic. For future rehearsals I have insisted on nothing heavier than a rolled up *Punch.*"

"I should think Mr. Cosway had had enough of rolled up punches," I said.

"Ah, you're making a little joke, Mr. Marsham. You're on the mend. I shall write Mr. Hibben about that little joke. It will reassure him."

As I was still being an invalid, Hunt went through all the outward signs and contortions of uncontrollable laughter in absolute silence.

I took the opportunity of being laid up with my wound to give Andersen a severe lecture on his behaviour, and I managed to convince him that, if he had never taken off all his clothes in the upper town of Bahia, I should never have been stabbed in the lower town. He was truly penitent, and did his best to show his sorrow by waiting upon me with the greatest devotion.

What annoyed me most about the whole business at Bahia was the dismissal of Ito, our Japanese steward, nor did his substitute, a villainous-looking negro, do anything to mitigate my displeasure. I felt sure that Hearne had wondered if I might not try to employ the Japanese as a spy upon him. I only hoped that nothing more serious than being paid off happened to the poor little fellow. I knew that anyone capable of arranging the attack made upon myself was capable

of arranging any murder that happened to suit his book. I never did discover what happened to Ito, for it would have been a waste of time to ask Hearne or Harper or any of the ship's company.

We made a good passage to Rio de Janeiro, and the doctor there, who was brought on board to see me, said the wound was healing as well as could be expected in the salt-laden air of shipboard, and that before we left Rio he would take out the stitches.

I did not go ashore with the others, but spent two pleasant days on deck, gazing at the wonderful bay. The strange thing about those long days I spent alone, with nothing to distract me except the light and shade of that beautiful scene, is the importance they assume when I look back on them now and try to decide how much of the emotion I received from them at the time should be if possible reproduced. I could write pages of description, and at the end of them neither my readers nor I should be any the wiser for those pages; they would possess nothing but a colored photograph of Rio, and I should not have discovered what makes those long days assume such a significance for myself.

When we sailed out of the bay, and set our course southward, I cannot remember that I was aware of any change in what I may call the key of our adventure; but now when I am writing about it, I am acutely conscious of an abrupt modulation. It might well be argued that I am analyzing sensations in the knowledge of subsequent events, and I am conscious of exposing myself to such a criticism, because, however hard I may try to give an impression of the incomplete knowledge I possessed at the moment, the fact that I do know what happened to us all, and why it happened must expose my analysis to the gravest suspicions. However, I am going to take the risk of being laughed at and declare my belief that, while I was sitting idly watching the light and shade over that glorious bay,

the chief villains of the piece affirmed their will to carry through what they had planned to carry through in London before we set sail. And I believe that, while I sat drowsed by the beauty of Rio de Janeiro, this sinister affirmation was communicated to my instinct. After all, I had disturbed Hearne sufficiently in Bahia to rouse in him a determination to get rid of me; as for Harper, he must have had some kind of a presentiment about me that morning in Panton Street when he practically turned me out of his office. I do not think it extravagant to suppose that a sense of the peculiar ill-will they cherished against me might have been communicated. However, what does it matter? Time has not made that blue air less luminous nor faded the vivid and opulent green of that vegetation, nor dulled the color nor blunted the outlines of those purfled and fantastic peaks.

On the morning of our departure Rio was shrouded in drizzling rain, and outside we ran into an ugly gray swell which, though we were still many hundreds of miles away from where the trunk of South America nuzzles the wild Antarctic, reminded us most unpleasantly of that ocean's existence, and we all felt anxious when we were told that the *Octoroon* would not coal at Buenos Aires, but would make the long voyage to Punta Arenas without a stop. And a beast of a voyage it was, too, even in the ordinarily benign Thirties; but when we reached the Forties, it became infernal. The change of climatic conditions produced a corresponding change in the character of our party. Newton after yawning at intervals for several hours remained below for several days, and when he came up on deck again, he was for a long time much too queasy to make himself conspicuous in any way. Hunt was as bad. Not even the arrival of the first albatross driven unusually far north by the severe weather could rouse his interest. He actually confided in me that he was

beginning to feel that he had made a mistake in embarking on such a long voyage at his time of life, and he went deeply and anxiously into the possibility of being put ashore on the coast of Patagonia. Biscoe was laid out half the time, and the rest of it he spent clinging to the life-rail. With his yellow face, and clad in the yellowest suit of oilskins I have even seen, he put me in mind standing there at the foot of the mainmast of a canary whose cage had been knocked over, so that the perch was perpendicular, and the bath was dripping on it from overhead. Miss Ovenden and Miss Arnhoe retired to inject each other with hyoscine, which Miss Titchener in one of her rare moments of ease, told me she thought was a very dangerous drug, and really quite a wrong thing to do. Mrs. Bonney managed to be fairly bright with her husband; but she was dismal and unreceptive with everybody else.

I may as well admit straight away that I was myself pretty bad most of the time. Perhaps that is the real reason why I look back to those days in the harbor of Rio de Janeiro as so significant, for I never felt awake till we rounded Cape Virgin and escaped those abominable rollers from the southward. I certainly did not bother to speculate any more about our ultimate destination; since it was presumably land somewhere, I felt that was enough, and as for the mysterious unknown I completely lost my interest in him. Once or twice, to be sure, I did regret that my assailant in Bahia had missed a vital part in my body, and sometimes in the worst of the gales I used to play with the idea of a dark form creeping down to stab me when I lay groaning in my bunk, and I used to think with what alacrity I would pull open my pajamas, and point to the exact spot where my heart was still faintly beating.

It is hardly necessary to say that George and Pru-

dence were both perfectly well all the time, and that their father was not. I hope that I was not mean enough actually to grudge the children their enjoyment of the Roaring Forties, but I fear I must confess that I did gather a mild satisfaction from hearing that George's toucan was dead. Not that I had anything against the poor bird personally. In fact I liked it. But I think all will agree with me that on the morning of its death George had exceeded the legitimate ostentation of well-being, first by swinging for half-an-hour in some contraption he had rigged up for that purpose, and then by sitting down in the chair next to mine, and eating chocolates; worse, by taking several bites from each one, and thrusting upon my notice the mangled portions he had not yet had time to eat. I could not but regard the death of his bird as a judgment for such disgusting greed. It seemed to me that the behavior of Ajax in a thunderstorm was not more calculated to provoke the anger of Zeus. And I do not think that the death of the toucan was enough. I think that George ought to have been sick himself. I think that his green and ignominious collapse would have seemed a neater punishment. Since he remained boisterously well, I felt that he deserved to lose his toucan. For a day or two he and Prudence were very much upset (mentally alas, never physically), but presently they found another pet, almost as uncouth, in Jauncey, with whom they struck up a most violent friendship. I could not really resent this adoption of him by them, because it was obviously of the greatest service to Jauncey, who, though he was still as remote as ever from all of us, exchanged his solitary jingling promenades and hunched-up meditations for the company of the two children and, being apparently impervious to the motion of the yacht, gamboled with them all day on the sloping slippery decks. I can see him now like a great porpoise laughing and spluttering

on his back in the lee scuppers where he had been flung by one of those ghastly lurches of the ship which used to draw my inside as a dentist might draw a tooth.

The others of us who conspicuously enjoyed the bad weather were the Ringshaws. Geoffrey Ringshaw's appreciation took the form of drinking twice as much as usual, in which he was steadily encouraged by the Captain and the Purser, who must have made a handsome profit out of him, not only from the incessant brandies he poured down his throat, but also from his willingness when he was drunk to cut his own throat at euchre for their benefit. I can hear their voices in the reeking saloon now shouting Left Bower and Right Bower and Joker; and I can see Geoffrey Ringshaw's pale face and light-blue glittering eyes, and Hearne and Harper grinning and winking at each other and filling his glass and beckoning to the big negro steward to bring still another bottle. There was no doing anything with the silly fellow. His poor old mother used to remonstrate with him sometimes, but she did not worry him much, because she was too much excited about the improvement, every day more manifest, in the health of her elder son.

I had called the old lady mad when I first heard what she was proposing to do with Stephen Ringshaw. His history, when I heard it, seemed so tragical that I thought it a piece of criminal folly to lead him astray on an enterprise like this in the vain hope of recovering his health. I asked what future there was for a man like him, half paralyzed, even if the island should turn out to exist, the bungalows and the fertile tract of land prove to be real. Miss Titchener and I had talked the matter over so often when we sat stewing side by side in what now seemed the breathless and beautiful immobility of the doldrums.

"One hates to criticize people," Miss Titchener would murmur. "But . . ."

"Oh, of course, it doesn't do," I would agree. "But . . ."

"It seems to me so misplaced. Poor man! What will become of him?"

"His pioneering days are over," I would decide.

Miss Titchener would shake her head and whisper that she could not help feeling that Mrs. Ringshaw did not realize what it meant to settle down, as we were going to settle down, in a remote tropical island.

"It's so different for us," she would declare.

"Oh, of course, a different matter altogether," I would affirm.

"Dear, dear! I'm sure it's all most misplaced," she would sigh.

But Miss Titchener and I had been wrong; one morning, when the deck was almost horizontal, we agreed that we had been unduly pessimistic, for there was Captain Ringshaw walking more easily than we had ever seen him walk yet, and what is more, when he stopped courteously to pass the time of day with us and interrupt his promenade, here he was, talking just as much more easily than he had ever talked.

"Blowing. Blowing. Grand weather. Very grand. Will get more blowing soon. More grand."

We were so delighted to hear him express his enjoyment thus clearly that we forgave him his prophecy about the weather and became ourselves as enthusiastic over those confounded waves as a pair of nautical ballad-writers. The harder it blew, the better Captain Ringshaw became, until he was able in the roughest seas to scramble forward without help to where in the forepeak he liked to take up his position in the worst of the wind and breathe into his lungs that health for which he longed. Mrs. Ringshaw used to stand beside him, her gray hair wet with spray and lankly waving, and sometimes in her pride she would leave him there in the bows, and stagger back along the

deck, seeking somebody on whom to concentrate her wild and wandering gaze and to whom she might boast of her son's glorious advance. She used to tell us tales of his progress as a proud and fond mother might tell us about her baby's new words and new teeth. And indeed I think that on our course down the Roaring Forties she was suffering anew the pangs with which she bore him first, and I feared that, if soon she could not present him to the world as a perfect body reborn, she would go mad.

We sailed past the white cliffs of Cape Virgin in a hailstorm, and steamed on through the first narrows of the Straits of Magellan into a shrieking westerly gale, and when we dropped anchor in the roadstead of Punta Arenas, three weeks out from Rio de Janeiro, a fall of snow had whitened the low dreary hills behind the town and lent an added bleakness to a scene which in the most favorable circumstances would have been bleak enough. I do not think that any of us felt much inclined to go ashore even after the battering the sea had given us; but the prospect of coaling alongside one of the hulks we saw straining at their moorings was even less inviting, and so in the end we all went.

We found little to amuse us in Punta Arenas except a corrugated iron skating-rink, and that only really amused George and Prudence Cosway, because Jauncey whom they had managed to persuade on to skates kept falling with such violence on the rink that I thought the whole building would collapse. Mrs. Bonney and Miss Titchener spent their time looking for a suitable place in which to have tea, and they had just found one when Dick Duffy came to tell us that the wind had shifted into the east and that if we wanted to sleep aboard that night we must get away from the pier at once.

The *Octoroon* was already alongside one of the coal hulks, and as she was lying to windward it was consid-

ered more prudent to bring the ship's boats alongside the hulk and fetch us aboard across the gang-plank between the two vessels. The trans-shipment was dirty, unpleasant, and not a little dangerous, and it culminated in a tragedy when Captain Ringshaw, who had always refused the offer of anybody's arm since the remarkable improvement in his walking during the voyage down from Rio, slipped on the gang-plank and fell into the sea. He was probably crushed at once between the two hulls; but in any case with his infirmity, he would have stood small chance of keeping his head above water until he was rescued.

We spent a distressing two days after this lamentable occurrence, and being detained aboard the yacht by the easterly weather which made landing impossible, we had no outlet to relieve the gloom that had been cast upon our spirits. Mrs. Ringshaw refused to believe that her son was dead; indeed, I doubt if she even believed it when three days later we were able to land and heard that the body had been cast ashore by the breakers. Her attitude at the funeral was not that of a bereaved and distracted mother so much as of a woman who, against her better judgment, had allowed herself to be persuaded to take part in some entertainment of which she did not approve.

The cemetery at Punta Arenas was a desolate and unkempt plot of ground above the town exposed to all the winds. It had the virtue of toleration, and was not partitioned off into compartments for the various religions that claimed its eternal hospitality. As there was no English chaplain at the moment in Punta Arenas, Bonney officiated; and I do not think that the words of the Burial Service have ever sounded to me so deeply applicable to the brief span of human life as they sounded up there, with an icy wind whistling through the withered grass, and funereal wreaths of metal ticking fretfully against the crosses on the tomb-

stones, and a flurry of snow whirling round our bare heads.

It was disquieting to watch that old woman standing by the open grave, an incredulous contempt of the whole proceeding stamped upon her countenance, her arms folded in obstinate defiance of the mummery we were inflicting upon her, her glances continually turning toward the cemetery gate as if she expected to see her son walk in to join the downcast group, and by his arrival put us all to shame for playing such a farce of death. I thought from her attitude then that we might have trouble with her when it came to leaving Punta Arenas; and so it turned out. In fact, if it had not been that Geoffrey Ringshaw was more unpleasantly drunk than usual, I do not think that we should ever have got her away. His condition, however, forced upon her notice that she had another son to look after, and against this her fierce and dominant maternity was not proof. It seemed to strike her suddenly that, while she had been taking pride in the rapid restoration to health of Stephen, she had allowed Geoffrey to deteriorate. I could almost follow the working of the process by which she emerged from her concentration upon the one and plunged into a fresh concentration upon the other. I have said how much her attitude during the voyage down had reminded me of a woman under the spell of watching a baby's development. All this passionate observation was now transferred to Geoffrey. Whereas formerly she would have boasted to us of how many paces Stephen had taken along the deck, she now boasted to us of the number of glasses of brandy that Geoffrey had not drunk. Alas, poor lady, her pride was more humbled than exalted during our passage of the Straits, for I do not believe that Geoffrey was sober for one hour of all the time we were steaming into those sabre-toothed winds that raved against our progress west. Those winds! One

felt that it was they which had actually gashed and torn the extremity of this continent into such channels that even to this day most of it was still uncharted.

We were still too near the southern winter to get as much fine weather as even midsummer rarely grants to these latitudes. Yet we had one clear day, and by good fortune, we were anchored for some slight engine trouble in a green sound. At the head of a creek the end of a glacier gleamed with the bright and piercing blue of a god's-eye. The dusky purple bloom upon the tall forests of antarctic beeches, and the laureate woods of winter's-bark softened the harshness of the huge mountains that towered up from the sea. Many shapes and fragments of broken ice floated upon the water, mirrored in its green and tranquil depths like swans and frozen ships and sometimes whole palaces of marble. But this serenity was very brief. The snowy tops of the mountains soon vanished in seething gray clouds; the wind came shrieking down upon us; the demoniac musketry of hail resounded everywhere; the surface of the green sound was like crushed ice. Drake's musicians in the *Golden Hind* must have had hard work to play against the noise of the elements here; and I marveled at the audacity and the endurance of those old navigators. How intimately the history of the early voyages is written in every atlas, so that there is scarcely a cape or an island in this confusion of land's end which is not dedicated to saints and seamen or inscribed to the memory of the daily joys and sorrows of the gentlemen-adventurers who forced their small ships forward against wind and williwaws and furious tides.

The wind increased with the deepening of night; but we were considered to be riding in one of the safest of the almost invariably foul anchorages of the Straits, and the yacht stayed where she was. We were all under the weather, and we got so much on each other's

nerves in the saloon that everybody, except Geoffrey Ringshaw, who had acquired a firm habit of drinking with anyone that would keep him company until any hour, went early to his cabin. The short seas that the wind created in these land-locked waters made the ship's motion extremely lively, and for my part I began to believe that I preferred the motion of the Atlantic. I passed a wretched night, and was lying wide awake in my bunk about four o'clock in the morning, resentful of Biscoe's easy acquiescence, when I heard above the creaking of the ship a thunderous crash which was followed by the assault of a wave so much heavier than usual that I switched on the lamp, half-expecting to see that the deadlights of the cabin ports had come tumbling down. The increased motion subsided gradually; but I took some pleasure in waking Biscoe to ask what he thought had caused the crash.

"What crash?" he asked sleepily.

"A crash like forty thunderclaps," I told him. "Surely you can't have slept through that row? Anyway, I'm going on deck to see what it was. We may have struck a rock or drifted against the cliffs."

Biscoe was too comfortably half-asleep to pay attention to my alarms, but when he turned over, muttering a piece of fatuous optimism, I rather wished that something serious had happened, so that I might have the satisfaction of scoring off him. I now fancied that I could hear the tramp of agitated feet on deck, and without waiting to throw on more than an overcoat I hurried into the dimly lighted corridor between the staterooms, half irritably surprised as a child that wakes from a nightmare is surprised to find that the material world which he has suddenly regained is outwardly as tranquil as when he departed from it for sleep. I really had to make an effort to restrain myself from knocking at the door of every cabin I passed to wake its occupants from their stupid slumber. How-

ever, I resisted that temptation, and made for the companion, half-way up which I stood peering into the stormy gray moonlight. I could see a dark group by the lee rail aft, and above the noise of the wind I heard ring out the same voice I heard that night outside Madeira.

"Stand by with a boat!" it cried. "You'll have to get out a kedge if you don't want us to be stove in against the cliffs!"

We could not have been more than twenty yards from the shore, if that great wall of rock rising black and sheer against the dripping gray sky could be called a shore. Any nervousness I might have felt about the fate of the ship vanished in the thrill with which I realized that the voice I heard was the voice of old Abel Hearne, and that the mysterious unknown was no longer unknown, although his presence on board kept with such jealous secrecy made him more mysterious than ever. I had enough common sense to go below again, for I felt that, whatever the danger of the ship might be, my own position would be still more dangerous on such a night in such company if his son or Harper knew that I had discovered their secret. No, there was clearly nothing to be gained by thrusting myself forward immediately.

The excitement of the discovery so completely absorbed my speculation on getting back to the cabin that, when I heard another crash as loud as the first and followed like the first by a sudden increased agitation of the sea, I scarcely paid any attention to it. The presence of Abel Hearne on board had taken me back to that quiet June afternoon, and that quiet airy room in Maritime Terrace, and to the rage of the old man's son when he found us talking together about the past. I was quite sure now that the unknown island, on which he had been wrecked in 1874, was the island for which we were bound; but where that island

was, or why its situation should be wrapped in such mystery, or what part that old man was destined to play once more on an island where perhaps already he had played so sinister a part my imagination was incapable of providing any theory. I made up my mind about one thing, however, which was that in our next port of call I would have it out with Captain Hearne, and that with the help of my fellow-passengers, I would insist upon our being given a proper explanation of the whole enterprise.

In the morning we heard that the noises during the night were due to large pieces of ice breaking off the glacier, and falling into the sea. We had, as I thought, dragged our anchors, and we had been very near indeed to grinding our timbers against the jagged cliffs. My fellow-passengers were suitably thrilled by the thought of their narrow escape; but these glaciers and foul anchorages seemed unimportant, and all this labyrinth of waterways simple, compared with those uncharted mazes of ironbound human hearts through which I was hoping to steer myself and my companions in safety.

CHAPTER XII

THE PATAGONIAN CHANNELS

IT may seem odd that I should have said nothing about my discovery to any of my fellow-travelers, and I think I should have done so, if Newton and Miss Ovenden had not been among them, for the airs those two always gave themselves about the most unimportant little incidents with which they happened to be associated had given me a horror of appearing to compete. Newton had thoroughly resented my being stabbed instead of himself, and if now I was going to enshrine that affair in a romantic motive his chagrin would be insupportable. This all sounds very petty; but it must be remembered that we were on board ship, where pettiness flourishes in the ideal conditions provided for it. I should be glad to acquit myself of pettiness in the course I took, but I am afraid that I cannot. I am afraid that I really did want to play the lead in Valparaiso or whatever Chilian port we made before we crossed the Pacific. However, any misgivings I may have had about keeping silence were soon forgotten in the melancholy events that marked our passage of the Patagonian channels.

It was now the spring equinox in these latitudes, and with every day of our progress northward, we were made sensible of a kindlier clime. We had more frequent visions of the southern spurs of the Andes, of the vivid masses upon the shore and ferny vegetation slashed here and there with the brilliant efflorescence of some flowering shrub, and of the now almost uniform green of the forests beyond. The wind was no

longer ahead, and although it was still often cold enough to be unpleasant, it lacked that peculiarly bitter sting of ice. We all of us expanded, and fell easily into a mood that sees in every landscape the perfect background for a house in which to live out of the world. These verdurous solitudes became the abode of an idyllic race; and I was myself for a while sufficiently the dupe of this landscape not to mind even Miss Ovenden's dream of living here forever in a self-satisfied paganism.

We had several opportunities of landing in the various creeks and coves where in that unlighted labyrinth we sought a safe anchorage for the night. Biscoe was in raptures over the plants he recognized, of which I remember one like a shrubby lapageria (*philesia buxifolia*) with waxy crimson bells, which in another month or two, when in full bloom, would have been a wonderful sight. There was also a coral-budded creeper (*berberidopsis corallina*), and the jasmine-scented greenish-white flowers of winter's bark (*drimys winteri*) opening early on sheltered northerly slopes. There were hummingbirds, too, that flickered round us with the fearlessness and grace and impersonality of butterflies. Their bright eyes regard me yet when my fancy travels south.

"But why are there no Indians?" Miss Ovenden demanded knowingly. "Are we not to behold a single noble savage? Mr. Jauncey, you are as tall as the fabled giants of Patagonia. Couldn't you, oh, couldn't you surprise us by pretending to be one?"

"Umph?" Jauncey growled.

George Cosway dug him in the ribs, which was a habit of his with Jauncey these days and one which Jauncey seemed to enjoy, though Cosway and I felt rather nervous, as if the boy was tickling the nostrils of a sleeping hippopotamus with a bulrush.

"I never could stand seeing people being familiar

with the larger animals," Cosway whispered to me. And I quite agreed with him that it was the kind of performer's trick that made one's heart beat in the safety of the stalls.

"Couldn't you spring out at us from the next creek?" Miss Ovenden persisted. "In the appropriate costume, of course."

Jauncey instantly turned on his heels and walked away.

"Have I said anything wrong?" Miss Ovenden asked with that exasperating baby look of hers with which, I suppose, she had had a success with nurses thirty years earlier.

"Of course, you haven't, you dear thing," Miss Arnhoe assured her friend. "Men are so ridiculously touchy."

"Elaine won't do it again," the silly woman promised.

I had a momentary impulse to turn myself into an Indian and tomahawk Miss Ovenden where we stood with a belaying-pin.

And then Biscoe, Hunt, and Newton had to encourage the woman by taking up the question on her behalf, as if the lack of Indians was due to some failure of the ship's commissariat, and could be remedied. There was some excuse for Hunt, who really did want to gratify himself with the sight of an aborigine; but as Newton, according to his own account, had spent a year with a tribe of Canadian Redskins, and as Biscoe had quite enough in the flora of the district to keep himself busy, I could not forgive them for pandering to Miss Ovenden's complacency and conceit.

"Captain," Newton shouted, "Miss Ovenden wants to see some Indians. What can we do about it?"

"We ought to see some before we get to the Gulf of Peñas," said Hearne. "But they're a poor-looking lot in these parts."

"What's all this about Indians?" demanded Geoffrey Ringshaw, approaching the group in which this unfortunate discussion had been started. "I don't see any Indians," he went on. "Where are there any Indians?"

"There aren't any Indians, my dear boy, said his mother.

I looked at Geoffrey's flushed face and raw lids, and I thought that he would soon be seeing more than Indians, the way he was drinking.

"Where's Harper?" he shouted. "Here, Harper, why don't you provide some Indians for Miss Ovenden? Damme! you're Purser of this ship, aren't you?"

"Geoffrey! Geoffrey!" Mrs. Ringshaw expostulated. "Don't shout like that. And why won't you wear an overcoat on deck? It's very chilly, do remember."

"Chilly? Of course it's chilly!" he said with an idiotic drunken grin. "We're in Chile, aren't we? And so, it's high time I took a little something to keep out the chill."

With this he seized the Purser's arm and whooped: "What about it, old sport?"

I noticed that Harper winked at the Captain as he went off with Geoffrey Ringshaw to the saloon, and I was sure that the pair of them took a delight in filling the young fool up with drink. Miss Ovenden, under a quadruple escort of sycophants, went forward to watch for the smoke of an Indian encampment, and I was left with Mrs. Ringshaw.

"But I am positive that Geoffrey is drinking less," she told me. "I don't think that he begins so early in the morning now. I am confident that when the weather gets warmer he will give it up altogether. Poor boy, he feels the cold so terribly after Burma."

I told the old lady that I thought the best thing she could do for Geoffrey would be to abandon this voy-

age at the earliest possible opportunity, and get him back to England.

"Forgive my alluding to your great sorrow . . ." I began. Then I wished I had not spoken, for the old lady's wild blue eyes stared wildly toward the mountains beyond which that other son was buried in Punta Arenas, and I knew that I must not mention him yet.

"The sorrow of Geoffrey's drinking," I explained, clumsily trying to extricate myself and her. "I know what a sorrow that is to you. If I may say so without impertinence, he is terribly exposed to temptation on a voyage like this. And even if we ever reach this island, I can't help feeling that such a life would be a mistake for him."

"If Stephen had been spared to me, I should have gone on," she said, still staring east across those mountains.

"Yes, yes," I agreed in an agony of desire to keep the conversation away from Stephen and yet anxious to press my argument, because I felt that I really had a chance now of dissuading her from going on. I felt like one who beholds an ancient oak tree falling apart and seeks eagerly for chains with which to bind together the fissile branches.

"My point is this," I went on. "I've gathered from what you've told me sometimes of your affairs that you've sunk most of your available capital in this settlement. Wouldn't it be better to wait in Valparaiso, if you don't want to go back to England, until you can get some kind of assurance that the settlement is likely to suit Geoffrey? I would willingly undertake to advise you about that as soon as I could. You would have to cable to England to cancel the notes held by Mr. Collins, and I would try my best to persuade Captain Hearne and Mr. Harper to refund you some of the passage money."

"Which shows a very generous spirit!"

I turned round sharply and looked at Hearne, who was showing all his white teeth in a smile that somehow managed to be at the same time as nasty a snarl as I ever saw.

"I shouldn't listen to Mr. Marsham if I were you, Mrs. Ringshaw," said Hearne. "Mr. Marsham is much too fond of meddling in matters that don't concern him."

"Enough of that, Captain Hearne, I interrupted.

To my surprise, and I must admit much to my relief, the Captain turned on his heels and left us together again.

"Why don't you help me to keep Geoffrey from drink?" Mrs. Ringshaw demanded, clutching my shoulder as she spoke, and staring fiercely into my eyes. "If everybody helps me, he can be cured."

"I assure you, Mrs. Ringshaw, that none of us except the Captain and Mr. Harper do anything at all to encourage him."

"Those who are not with me," the old lady exclaimed vehemently, "are against me."

"But we are with you."

"Not actively. You don't do anything. Ah! that's what I've always said to my boys. You must take arms against a sea of troubles and by opposing end them. By opposing. Opposing! Opposing! Not by sitting round and criticizing in contemptible silence. Where is Geoffrey now? Go and find him, and snatch the glass from his lips. That is your duty to me, if you want to help me to save him from himself That would be a man's part. O God! Give me men that are men! Wait till we see my son Stephen again at Valparaiso. He'll show you all how to deal with Geoffrey's weakness. Stephen is a man!"

Luckily for me, for I was entirely at a loss to know how to deal with poor Mrs. Ringshaw's burning ve-

hemence, a diversion was created by Hunt, who came running aft:

"By Jove, Mr. Marsham, we've seen them!" he cried. "We have, by Gemini, we have! We have indeed! It's an encampment. We shall be on it in a minute. It was Miss Ovenden who sighted them. 'Indians!' she said. 'By Jove,' I said, 'you're right!' She held herself like a Amazon. I must get my sword-stick. Captain Hearne is going to, very obligingly and simply to give us the pleasure of a little adventure, drop anchor. May I offer you a packet of beads, Mr. Marsham? I'm hoping to obtain the skin of a sea-otter. If I do, I shall send it to Mr. Hibben. It will create a sensation. It will be on view in Savile Row. Mrs. Ringshaw, may I venture to beg your acceptance of some beads? For barter!"

Hunt was too much excited to wait another moment and he left us, shouting all along the deck:

"Indians! Indians! A superb encampment of Indians!"

Mrs. Ringshaw was unconscious of anything except her own thoughts, so with a murmured apology I turned away and hurried forward to join the others, who were crowded in the forepeak to welcome the thrilling prospect. I am of a contrary nature, and I hated the way Miss Ovenden talked as if these were the first Patagonians beheld by human eyes since the days of Magellan himself, and worse, as if we only beheld them now owing to some bewitching quality in herself that had evoked them; but in spite of her I could not help being thrilled. Yes, the big canoe that came alongside was a misshapen craft, and the occupants were squalid and unpleasant, particularly one old crone whose hideous nakedness would be a good object lesson to Andersen, but I was undeniably thrilled.

"You, of course, can speak their language fluently," Cosway drawled to Newton, who was showing off for

Miss Ovenden's benefit by bellowing 'Hi!' and pointing to a necklace round the neck of a young Indian woman wearing a waistcoat upside down, her legs through the armholes, and suckling a child.

Hunt saved Newton the trouble of explaining why he never managed to become fluent in Patagonian by arriving with his beads. Alas, he was a century behind the times. They had no use for his beads; and when he tried to press a handful upon one of the women, a surly-looking fellow stood up and threatened him with a paddle. In fact, the only thing that seemed to rouse their cupidity was Cosway's fur coat, to part with which he was offered two babies.

We found the Indians so interesting that the Captain offered to stay at this anchorage until the next morning so that we might spend the afternoon in studying these human dregs which had sunk to the bottom of a continent and remained there to remind modern man that he had limpet-eating ancestors. They had with them some relatively very intelligent dogs of the lurcher type; and to me by far the most entertaining part of the experience was a demonstration these animals gave of driving fish toward the rough nets of their masters. I suppose that a good setter is not less wonderful; but the cleverness of these dogs struck me more forcibly because of the degraded state and low intelligence of the savages who had trained them. I found the process of bartering a little tiresome, perhaps because all that I obtained after giving away most of my matches was a bailing-pot made of birch-bark, an ill-fashioned utensil of a piece with the canoe, the crazy planks of which bound together with the sinews of sea-birds let in as much water as the bailing-pot let out.

After the preliminary thrill I did not like these savages. They looked to me brutish, greedy, and treacherous, and the consciousness of their humanity

was to me unpleasant. I have the same kind of horror of monkeys. The companionship of a cat seems to me normal and decent. The cat has reached the highest level of its development and possessing an individual point of view has nothing in common with mankind, of whose upholstery and dairies it makes use, offering in exchange its own grace and beauty and serenity of poise. I do not by any means dislike dogs, but I do deplore their inclination to flatter human nature by fawning upon its superiority. It was exasperating to see these lurchers at the beck and call of such brutes. A cat inhabits one's house as presumably Queen Elizabeth slept about the country in her subjects' beds; a dog stays with one like a poor relation. A cat is feminine and realistic; a dog is masculine and idealistic. A cat is romantic; a dog is sentimental. As for monkeys, and savages in the neolithic stage of development, they seem to me suitable pets for women like Miss Ovenden.

When the Captain offered to remain at anchor so near the encampment, I asked him if there was the slightest possibility of the natives trying to attack us during the night. It was an idle question uttered more for want of being in the least interested in those brutes than for any apprehensiveness. But the odd thing was that, when I asked it, he exchanged what is called a significant glance with Harper before he began to assure me in his smoothest and most persuasive tones that there was not the slightest danger of an attack. If he had flung me a curt and contemptuous negative, I should have thought no more of the matter; but by his elaborate answer he put it into my head that there really was some danger of their trying to rush the yacht. Not wishing to say anything within earshot of the ladies, I waited till the Captain and the Purser strolled aft together, when I followed them with the intention of thoroughly reassuring myself

about the alarming possibility which had entered my head. I happened to be wearing indiarubber-soled shoes, and so earnestly were they talking together by the mizzen-mast that I was near enough to hear a fragment of their conversation before they were aware of my approach.

"If we'd thought of that before," Harper was saying, "we might have got rid of the whole lot like that."

"We could do it now, if one of us could speak the lingo," Hearne answered regretfully.

"Well, the original plan is safer, even if it does mean burning a bit of extra coal."

"Yes, but it seems a pity," said Hearne. "Why, hulloa, Mr. Marsham! You gave me quite a start. We were just talking about those niggers."

I tried not to suggest that my suspicions had been in any way aroused, and I deliberately made a fool of myself by arguing about the possibility of a sudden attack upon the yacht.

"Don't you worry yourself, Mr. Marsham," said the Captain. "Harper and I haven't any intention of letting ourselves be massacred by taking unnecessary risks."

"Oh, that I well believe," I said with an indiscreet warmth of contempt that made the two rascals exchange another of those significant and questioning glances.

I was afraid that my indignation would get the better of me in a moment, and with this shot I turned away. *The original plan is safer.* You can imagine my sensations when I began to ponder that remark in my mind. I felt as a man condemned to death might feel if he overheard his jailers discuss hanging him, and then decide to fall back on the method chosen originally as more certain. I was afflicted by that abominable sense of isolation that a man sometimes feels in the presence of a great danger, even when he

knows that the companions round him are just as dangerously situated as himself. The landscape afflicted me with an intolerable claustrophobia. I felt that I must tear down the snow-capped peaks and uproot the mountains eastward, and sweep into the sea the green islands westward. The reach of silver water before us appeared as infinitely long and its narrow horizon as hopelessly unattainable as one of those ghastly horizons that lure forward one's feathery legs and jellied knees in nightmares. The unwonted stillness of the air added to my horror, because it enhanced our own impotency and immobility.

What I have taken so many words to attempt to reproduce was of course a momentary crisis of the nerves, which was almost immediately succeeded by a cool and practical resolve to make that safer original plan miscarry. But how that landscape is imprinted on my mind! I can see every detail of it now as clearly as one of those imperishable landscapes of childhood —the glittering white saw of the Southern Andes cutting across the blue sky; the undeviating and narrow reach of water shimmering in the sun's eye beyond a green spit of woodland on which stood the Indian habitations, tumbledown frames of boughs sparsely covered with sealskins; that motionless plume of smoke; that thicket of barberries brilliant with vivid blooms of orange deepening to copper; that now less gaudy figurehead of the *Octoroon* mirrored in the water, and the foremast stark against the sky.

I decided now that I would take Cosway and Biscoe into my confidence and discuss with them our situation; but my first impulse had been right, for they were neither of them in the least impressed by my forebodings.

"But are you really convinced that you heard this strange voice?" Cosway asked.

"Oh, leave the mystery of that on one side," I

exclaimed irritably. "I suppose you won't suggest that I only imagined my wound in Bahia?"

"That may easily have been a coincidence," said Biscoe.

"Well, I'm perfectly sure of the contrary," I went on. "But that again is something which has already happened. I only referred to it in order to try to get into your dull imaginations the fact that we are up against an unscrupulous partnership in our precious Captain and his Purser. You both of you know perfectly well that you feel a doubt about the genuineness of the settlement. You, Cosway, have several times alluded to it as a swindle."

"Yes, yes, my dear fellow," Cosway interposed. "But between your theory and my theory there is a wide gulf. You seem to expect that we are all to be got rid of somehow. Why? How? Even you don't pretend to think that we are to be massacred by Patagonian natives. And if you'll forgive my saying so, it seems to me that your nerves have led you into an erroneous interpretation of the snatch of conversation you overheard. *We might have got rid of the whole lot like that.* I really fail to see why that should inevitably mean us. It might just as well be some cargo that they are carrying. And then again *The original plan's safer, even if it does mean burning more coal.* You're hardly going to suggest that we are to be used as fuel for the *Octoroon.* That really would be an exaggerated interpretation. I don't want to be offensive, but I think you've got a bit nervy, what with your wound and poor Ringshaw's death and that infernal weather we had in the Straits."

"I agree with you, Cosway," said Biscoe. "Marsham's one of those sceptics who, when he does believe a thing, believes it with a fervor that sweeps everything else aside. Before we started on this voyage, he never believed that we should sail at all. And now

he's asking us to believe something infinitely more fantastic than Harper's prospectus. Hunt is your man, Marsham; he loves to have his blood curdled. He'll do sentry-go with you all night as long as you let him have his sword-stick."

I lost my temper when Biscoe talked like this. I could hardly be expected to stand this kind of paternal lecture from him.

"You were brim full of romance and adventure after you'd drunk a bottle and a half of Burgundy," I reminded him. "But when you get down to it, Biscoe, you're still an assistant-curator. Your greatest adventure will always be hunting bugs and chipping off bits of rock, and the zenith of your romance will be the discovery of some obscure herb that you can strangle with some monstrous Latin concatenation of your own invention."

With this I walked off, so much annoyed with myself for having given Biscoe an opportunity to round on me for my attitude in London toward the expedition that I was half inclined to hope for something to happen that would shake his academic and priggish complacency. I notice that in this narrative I am continually labeling people as complacent; but I daresay I may have seemed the most complacent of them all until I got stabbed that night in Bahia. That was the sting in Biscoe's observations.

When I reached the deck (I had taken Cosway and Biscoe down to my cabin to reveal the conspiracy), I found that a party was being formed to row ashore and investigate at close quarters the life of the encampment. I noticed with surprise that Geoffrey Ringshaw was among those who were preparing to go. I declined at first to go myself, for after my talk with Cosway and Biscoe, I was feeling unreasonably sore with all my fellow-passengers. However, I let myself be persuaded in the end, and I found as I expected

that the encampment was nothing but a collection of strong smells and kicking babies. I was afraid at one time that we should have trouble, because Ringshaw, who was as usual half-drunk, tried to be funny with some of the Indian girls, which brought one of the men to his feet with an upraised club. But Ringshaw produced a bottle of whisky from his pocket, and peace was restored.

That night my malaise returned, and I felt disinclined to retire to my bunk. But my vanity had been so deeply pricked by Biscoe's chaff about doing sentry-go with Hunt that I was ashamed to wander about on deck, and in the end I decided to tell Andersen to take a look round from time to time, and if he saw anything worth reporting, to come and wake me. At half-past-one he tapped at the cabin. I was not asleep, and was at the door before Biscoe stirred.

"Mr. Ringshaw and Mr. Harper have just gone off in a boat, sir," he told me. "The Captain was daring them to go ashore."

"To go ashore?" I repeated in amazement. "What folly is this?"

I flung on some things and hurried on deck. It was a night of absolute darkness, for the clouds had gathered at sunset, and there was not a star visible. I heard the sound of a boat grating on the beach and, running across to the starboard rail, I bumped into Hearne.

"What's this I hear about Ringshaw?" I asked angrily. "What right have you to let him leave the ship at this time of night?"

"It was a drunken man's fancy, Mr. Marsham. But Mr. Harper has gone with him, so you needn't be alarmed."

"I should say you must be as drunk as Ringshaw, Captain Hearne, to allow such an excursion."

The fragment of conversation I had heard that

afternoon was singing in my brain, and in this darkness, fit culture for morbid fancies, I was so much under the obsession of a plot to have us all massacred that I was on the verge of ordering Andersen to go and rouse every passenger while I kept watch over Hearne. Then I grasped the revolver in the pocket of my overcoat and meditated on the idea of forcing Hearne at its point to admit everything. I fingered the weapon uncertainly. People who use revolvers in books are always so prompt; but in reading of their successes I have sometimes wondered what they would have done if their victims had declined to be frightened. And with my hand on my revolver I was wondering now what I should do if I threatened Hearne and he paid no attention. Should I instantly shoot him? Or should I merely repeat the question?

"Be careful that weapon in your pocket doesn't go off," said the Captain with a genial laugh. "You might hit me."

I dropped the revolver like a child caught in a piece of mischief and took my hand from my pocket so quickly that Hearne roared with laughter. It may have been that I could not see his eyes in the darkness, and that therefore his laugh sounded like the expression of genuine good-will, but whatever the reason, I was tempted at that moment to ask him why he took so much trouble to conceal the presence of his father on board. I really think that I should have done so, if a violent noise of barking dogs had not suddenly begun on shore and taken my mind back to what had brought me on deck.

"Captain Hearne," I said, "I gathered from the piece of your conversation I overheard this afternoon that you regretted not having made arrangements to have us all massacred by natives. I have myself only too good reason to suppose that you would stick at nothing to remove anybody who was in your way. My

wound still throbs often enough to remind me of that. But what I know about you other people know. What I have grasped about your intentions I have taken care to confide in other people. So, you'll not do yourself much good by getting rid of me. I don't pretend to understand your object in letting a drunken man visit a native encampment at this time of night; but no doubt you have done so for some purpose of your own."

"Listen!" the Captain cried suddenly, and he grasped my wrist.

I heard the creaking of rowlocks and the faint splash of oars coming nearer. We stood in silence until the gig bumped gently against the side of the yacht, and then the lugubrious tones of Harper's voice were heard coming up through the darkness.

"Captain! Captain! A dreadful thing has happened! Mr. Ringshaw was struck on the head by a club. He wouldn't listen to my warning. He'd got into his head that he had an appointment with that girl who took his fancy yesterday."

"Have you brought him back?" Hearne asked.

"No, no! We had to leave the body where it lay," Harper replied, and his two heavy footsteps were now audible on the deck. "He died without so much as a groan, Captain."

"This is too much, you villians!" I shouted, as I turned to run aft and rouse some of my incredulous friends.

Hearne leapt forward to stop me, and had he succeeded in catching me I do not doubt but that my body would have been found with Ringshaw's next morning. However, he did not catch me, for the excellent Andersen caught him instead by the ankles, and brought him down with such a crash that, his head meeting a samson post on the way, he lay where he fell on the deck without moving. I was not

half-way down the saloon-companion with Andersen close behind me, when the idea came into my head of trying to surprise another fragment of Hearne and Harper's conversation. Telling Andersen to wait for me, I crept back and managed to get within earshot without stumbling and betraying my whereabouts.

"What did you try to stop him for, Harry?" Harper was asking.

"I meant to pay the —— once and for all," said Hearne. "But who brought me down?"

"Nobody brought you down," said Harper. "You must have tripped."

"Trip be damned! Somebody caught me round the ankles. You'd better get aft, Ben, and quiet 'em all down."

"Why quiet them down?" Harper asked. "Let 'em go ashore if they want to. With any luck one or two more will get knocked out with clubs before sunrise."

"Damme, Ben, but you've a head, and no mistake," said the Captain admiringly. "And so have I," he added rubbing the bruise.

The barking of the dogs on shore began again more violently than ever, and the more I thought about doing anything to-night, the less I liked the notion. After all, Ringshaw was dead, and if it was a question of punishing the natives we should be better able to do that by daylight; if, however, as I rather suspected, Ringshaw had been murdered by Harper himself, we should be able to investigate that more satisfactorily in the morning. I went back to the cabin, where being by now completely worn out by the strain of trying to decide what I ought to do I fell asleep almost at once.

My behavior may strike you as contemptibly irresolute; but even now I really do not know what I could have done. Suppose I had shot Hearne or Harper? I doubt if I should have been able to justify my action. My talk with Cosway and Biscoe had already shown

me the difficulty of convincing people that the promoters of the settlement were as desperate as I believed them. Nobody except myself had seen their ugly side, and what was to be deduced from the presence of old Abel Hearne on board? If he had been kept out of our way by his son, he had not been kept out of the way because he was an old tippler. They would have used Geoffrey Ringshaw as an example of the fatal effects of heavy drinking. And suppose I had roused my fellow-passengers, and we had invaded the native encampment, we might easily have had the worst of the encounter, unless we could have been sure of the ship's company. Jauncey, Hunt, Cosway, Biscoe, Bonney, Newton, myself, what did we know about fighting Patagonians in the dark? I am afraid that I shall have to sit still under the implication of cowardice, for I do admit that indecision is as much cowardice as running away.

In the morning, when we landed to bury poor Geoffrey Ringshaw, we found neither the body nor any sign of the Patagonians except the bare frames of their tents and the atrocious stench of their middens. It may have been fancy, but I thought that Harper seemed relieved when the body was not found. Anyway, the disappearance of the body made it impossible for me to suggest that he was the murderer; a responsibility (I suppose this was cowardice too) of which I was glad to be relieved.

Now another problem arose, which was how to convince Mrs. Ringshaw that her son was dead. She simply would not believe it; and, remembering her behavior in Punta Arenas at the funeral of Stephen, we saw not the slightest probability of ever being able to convince her. Finally, in order to calm her, we had to form search parties, useless as they were certain to be and dangerous as they were likely to become. To make matters worse, the clouds were manoeuvering

low down before the advent of a storm, and the Captain, uneasy about the anchorage, was anxious to proceed. However, we explored the immediate surroundings in company, and Biscoe had the gratification of scratching his face and hands in a thicket of what looked like hollies with orange and red tubular flowers.

"*Desfontainea spinosa!*" he cried. "By Jove, I *am* glad we came ashore!"

It was the remark of a vivisectionist.

When we all gathered on the beach, soaked to the skin, and much harassed by the prospect of having to deal with Mrs. Ringshaw, we found that she was missing. Urgent signals were being made from the yacht to hurry up and come aboard. Already we could hear the chain rattling up through the hawse holes, and there fell upon us the panic that the imminent departure of a ship can so fearfully cast upon a crowd of passengers. We scuttled hither and thither like disturbed ants; we shouted and cooee'd; some of us even tried to climb trees to see if we could catch a glimpse of the poor wandering old lady.

Then Harper, who was on shore, declared that if she could not soon be found we must abandon her. I suppose that his success had made him bold, and personally I was not in the least surprised by his proposal. The others, however, turned on him with such indignation that he pretended he was only joking.

"Joking!" Bonney exclaimed to me. "Joking! It would take an ex-Wesleyan missionary to make a joke at this moment!"

We could see the ladies, who of course had been left on board, watching us in evident anxiety. Perhaps Hearne had announced his intention of marooning us all, if we did not get into the boats soon and come off to the yacht. We told Harper to go and explain what was the matter, and when he was half-

way to the yacht I had a sudden dread lest we really might all be left behind, and the women find themselves at the mercy of those two blackguards. I did not wish even Miss Ovenden such a fate as that. However, Harper brought the Captain back with him, and the pair of them had the impudence to insist that if Mrs. Ringshaw could not be found within an hour the yacht would sail, with or without its full complement of passengers.

"Now, perhaps you'll realize," I said to Cosway and Biscoe, "that I was not exaggerating their potential villainy."

But Cosway and Biscoe maintained that the threat was not meant seriously, that it was a mere display of bad temper, and that after all in a way we could make allowances for them.

"The Captain is bound to think first of his ship," said Biscoe with that assumption of instructiveness I was beginning to find so intensely irritating. Indeed, I had been wondering several times lately if I could not manage to share a cabin with somebody else. I smoothed my ruffled feelings at the expense of my clothes by plunging into the sodden undergrowth, and shouting at the top of my voice for Mrs. Ringshaw.

I have now to try to explain an action of mine that in the cold light of the written word is exceedingly difficult to justify. I suppose that I had been tearing my way through the bushes for about a quarter of an hour when suddenly I emerged into a comparatively open space which had evidently lain in the path of some forest fire, for here and there the charred remains of the trunks rose from a carpet of prostrate plants with which the blackened ground was already thickly covered. In the middle of this clear space and right in my path stood a native. The man showed no sign of attacking me; indeed, he looked amazed at my sudden appearance. Yet without a moment's hesitation

I pulled out my revolver and shot the creature dead, and the only emotion I felt when I had done this was one of slightly agreeable surprise at having killed him so neatly. When later on I thought over this deed, I came to the conclusion that the impulse that prompted my hand, was really more than anything else, a kind of desperate determination to know if I could shoot a man. I believe that I had deeply felt the humiliation of dropping my revolver like a hot coal when Captain Hearne jeered at my irresolution in the darkness. I think that I must have suffered all night from a subconscious brooding over this and that my will must have taken charge of my intelligence. It might be argued that this is no more than ordinary homicidal mania, but in fairness to myself I must claim that there lay behind my impulse a desire to prove myself capable of sustaining responsibility, even to the point of doing violence, should such violence be necessary for the safety of us all. Perhaps, too, there was in my murder of this inoffensive Indian an expression of the repulsion with which our visitors yesterday had filled me and the disgust with which the overpowering stench of the middens had affected me, while we were arguing on the beach about the departure of the yacht and the disappearance of Mrs. Ringshaw.

While I stood regarding the body of my victim with no more emotion than I should have given to the contemplation of a dead rabbit, I heard the voice of Mrs. Ringshaw crying: "Geoffrey! Geoffrey! Is that you?"

I suppose that the sound of the shot had knocked upon her distracted mind like a summons. She came walking over the spongy ground like a somnambulist, and she was staring at each one of the blackened skeletons of trees in her path as if in each one she were trying to recognize the lineaments of her lost son. Then a horrible thing happened; for perceiving the

dead body at my feet, she stumbled forward and falling upon her knees beside it began to speak to it with endearing words, to caress its hideous cheeks, even to raise the limp and repulsive shape and clasp it to her heart.

"Mrs. Ringshaw," I cried. "What are you doing? That is not your son!"

She looked up at me from under knitted brows; and then by its shoulders she held the body out at arm's length, so that the head sagged heavily forward on the chest.

"O dear! O dear! He's been drinking again!" she moaned. "O Geoffrey, Geoffrey! They told me you'd been killed! I suppose they didn't like to tell me you were the worse for drink. Isn't that Mr. Marsham? I must thank you very much, Mr. Marsham, for so kindly looking after my boy. I'm only so sorry that you should have seen him in this condition. Geoffrey, Geoffrey, how could you let yourself fall into this state? I don't know how we are to get him back to the yacht," she went on, turning to me, "I really don't think he's able to walk. I'm afraid I shall have to carry him. And everybody will see the state he's in. It's such a dreadful disgrace. However, it's all among friends. That's one good thing."

I saw that it would be useless to try to convince her that this thing was not her son, and even if I could have convinced her she would probably have rushed away in horror and made my task more difficult. In fact I began to think that the only way we should be able to persuade her to return to the ship was by letting her fancy that she was bringing back her son. It seemed best to play this macabre farce to its conclusion, and I asked her if she would stay here and look after Geoffrey while I went to find help.

"Help for what?" she asked.

"Help to get him back to the yacht," I explained.

"But you and I can carry him, Mr. Marsham. He was never very heavy."

I tried to argue with her; but she vowed that if I attempted to fetch anybody else she would carry him by herself, and I could not face the thought of this poor distracted creature dragging along the dead Indian without help, which she was certainly quite prepared to do. In the end I gave way and, if the deed I had committed is to be counted a crime, I paid the penalty during that ghastly struggle back through the thicket. It seemed to last hours, and all the while I was in an agony that when we reached the water's edge we should find the ship gone, and that here in this desolate and unfriendly land I should be left with this corpse and this demented mother, until we starved to death or were killed by the natives. The ship's hooter began to call, and this sound, which is the very essence of urgency, tempted me to drop my burden and run madly ahead to show myself before it was too late. My face was torn and scratched; my arms ached almost unendurably.

"I'm afraid that Geoffrey is tiring you," said Mrs. Ringshaw. "I wonder if he couldn't manage to walk by himself a little bit."

But I paid no attention, and at last, that I should have lived ever to call it welcome, the stench of the middens upon the air was perceptible. A few minutes later we emerged upon the beach. The wind was by now blowing very hard from the west, and a squall of hail caught me as I ran toward the only boat that had not rejoined the yacht. If you want to know what pain is, try running through a hailstorm when your face and hands are scratched to pieces. I gasped out an explanation of what had happened, though I did not reveal that I had killed the Indian, and insisted that the only way to get Mrs. Ringshaw back on board was by keeping up the pretence that the body really

was her son's. Newton, Cosway, Biscoe and Harper were the ones left; the others were back on board, for Hearne had vowed that he could not stay another ten minutes where he was, though he had promised to come back and pick up any of us who were left behind. I said to myself that he would never have come back to pick me up, and then suddenly, with the pain and strain and relief, I collapsed, and had to be dragged into the boat, bruising my ribs on the thwart to wind up a dreadful morning.

When Mrs. Ringshaw was once more safely on the yacht, the body of the Indian had to be got rid of; and we all had to set to work to persuade her somehow that Geoffrey was not drunk but dead, for it would have been needlessly cruel, and in any case, it would probably have been impossible, to make her realize that she was lavishing her affection upon the dead body of an Indian. And then, when we seemed at last to have convinced her that Geoffrey was really dead, Bonney declined to read the Burial Service.

"But you must," I urged. "You owe it to that poor woman's peace of mind. She thinks that it's her son, and we can't fling the corpse overboard without a word."

"I can't read the Burial Service over a heathen," said Bonney obstinately.

"But you've no right to assume that this poor savage was a heathen," I argued. "How do you know he wasn't baptized by some missionary? Don't you remember that in Punta Arenas the English chaplain was always baptizing the heathen in Tierra del Fuego? Which shows that there is a possibility of this man's having been baptized."

But Bonney refused to accept this as justification for giving Christian burial to an unvouched-for native. If it had not been for his wife, I doubt he would never have given way. She, however, managed to persuade

him, by dressing up common-sense in a theological disguise, that he was morally bound to give the Indian the benefit of the doubt. Thus the body was committed to the deep as the body of a Christian.

From that moment Mrs. Ringshaw spent all her time gazing down into the water, where on the day we emerged from the Patagonian channels into the troubled Gulf of Peñas she saw a seal swimming with that pathetic expression of human helplessness beside the yacht.

"Geoffrey!" she cried, and had thrown herself overboard before any of us could stop her.

I feel here that I ought to take back some of the things that I have said about Newton, because without a moment's hesitation he did jump into the sea after her. So did I; but I deserve no credit for my action, because by killing that wretched Indian I was in a way responsible for her now imagining that the seal was her dead son. We did not manage to save the poor old lady; indeed, Newton and I were only rescued ourselves with the greatest difficulty, and I believe that we were only saved through the good luck of Dick Duffy's being officer of the watch at the time.

I do not want to suggest that we were heartless; but it was inevitable that we should feel a sense of relief, now that we were relieved of the heavy responsibility that old lady's distraught mind had cast upon us. Cosway was the only person to whom I gave an accurate account of the circumstances in which I killed the Indian. He showed himself to possess a sympathetic imagination and assured me that he perfectly understood the mixture of motives which had prompted my abrupt action. It was at Cosway's suggestion that the others were told that I had fired in self-defense.

"It makes me feel a bit of a Newton," I objected.

"My dear fellow, you don't want to upset the ladies unnecessarily."

"But women so often understand motives better than men," I argued.

"Oh, I've no doubt that they would understand right enough," he said. "But they would feel bound to flatter the other men by pretending not to understand. The average woman thinks that all men like to be considered matinée heroes, and since coquetry is her main business she is not going to run the risk of appearing disenchantingly realistic."

"But women *are* realistic."

"I quite agree. But they appear sentimental to gratify the noble male. A woman's sentiment, like her clothes, is put on to provoke men and annoy other women."

"When shall we reach Valparaiso?" I asked Hearne, a few days after this conversation. It struck me that we were steering very far to westward, even though I knew that a good offing was required to make the coast of Chile again above the Forties, and that we must take advantage of the present northerly wind to get away from what would be a dead lee shore, should the westerlies blow strong.

"Valparaiso?" he echoed. "You'll never see Valparaiso this voyage. Our next landfall will be the island, if all goes well with the course we steer."

I looked aft, and there, his white beard blowing in the wind like spindrift, I saw old Abel Hearne at the wheel.

CHAPTER XIII

ACROSS THE PACIFIC

PRESUMING that Abel Hearne's public appearance was a token that the barrier erected between him and the passengers was removed, I took the first chance I could, and that was as soon as he left the wheel, of having a talk with the old man. I do not think that the Captain was best pleased even now to see me in conversation with his father; but perhaps he was relieved not to have the change in his plans by which we should not call at Valparaiso too much taken into question, and we were allowed five minutes together with no more interruption than his suspicious regard from the bridge.

"Your presence on board has been kept very dark," I said to the old man.

"Aye, dark's the word," he agreed. "And I grew a bit tired of it, mister. I haven't seen the sun not what you might call properly, not since we sailed. Except once in Bahia, when I up and said if Harry didn't leave me go ashore I'd walk into the saloon and ask the reason why at dinner; and when I did get ashore, they shut me up in a box like a poppy-show, and promised me a drink if I wouldn't holler out. But I never had my drink, and that's Harry all over. Fads and fancies, that's what you might reckon to say Harry was. Still, I passed the time away somehow not too bad in a manner of speaking. There was one young fellow aboard knew how to drink, glass for glass, as well as anyone I ever see'd. Poor young chap, they tell me he got into trouble with the niggers and was

hit on the head down South. I was sorry about that, for he was a civil-spoken young chap and he drank as hearty as any I ever see'd, glass for glass. Him and me was very friendly. He was a young fellow as took no interest in anything, that's what I liked about him. Give him his drink and that was all he asked, that and a game of cards sometimes. But a drink was what he liked best. I was middling sorry when they told me of the way he was knocked out of this life. But there you are! Anyone can't live forever, can they? And there's one thing I was glad to hear. Yes, they tell me he died drinking, so in a manner of speaking you may say he died happy and kept up his spirits to the last blink of this mortal life."

"And now we're really bound direct for the island?" I asked.

"There you go again! That's what got you and me into trouble before. Only now I'm sober, and back in Poplar I wasn't."

I felt that it would be unfair to expose the old man to the risk of being once more battened down all day under hatches, and I hoped to find him in a more communicative humor some other time when his son was out of the way. I was rather reassured than otherwise by our not stopping at Valparaiso, for this, coupled with the old man's appearance, seemed an earnest of our reaching anyway some island in the Pacific. I guessed that the reason for Hearne's change of plans was his unwillingness to appear before the British Consul and report to him the deaths of Mrs. Ringshaw and her two sons. I discussed with Cosway whether we ought not to ask what steps would be taken to see that the effects of the family now on board were handed over to the proper authorities; there might also be a legal question about the notes held by Collins. Cosway suggested that we had better wait until we had reached the island and knew how far any of the

scheme was genuine, before we took the matter up with the promoters of the expedition.

"It is clear that we can do nothing in mid-ocean," he pointed out. "And we have no moral right at present to suggest that we are more capable of taking charge of the Ringshaws' effects than the captain of the ship."

"And what about the island, Cosway?" I asked.

"Do you know, I'm beginning to wonder if it may not exist after all."

"And the bungalows, too?"

"Ah! the bungalows! No, I don't somehow feel that we shall see those bungalows."

"By the way, I was right about the voice."

"I like the looks of that old boy better than I like the looks of his son," Cosway said. "And do you still think that it was on his account you were stabbed in Bahia?"

"I've really given up bothering about it since we were clear of those Patagonian channels."

There is no doubt that we had all given up bothering about many things since we entered the Pacific. There is about that sublime ocean some indescribable quality, not entirely due, I think, to our foreknowledge of its immensity, which does correct the pettiness of human nature. In the most appalling manifestations of its power it has never horrified me in the way that the Atlantic has sometimes horrified me. Unplumbed it may be, but it is neither so salt nor so estranging as other seas.

Our course was still up the Roaring Forties; and, although every day of our northing the weather was perceptibly warmer, it was still bleak enough and blowy enough. Nevertheless, we were already, even at this stage of our voyaging on it, completely under the majestic influence of an ocean that is large enough to swallow the moon. In the bitter Strait of Magellan

and all the way up through those tortuous Patagonian Channels we had been restless on the ship and irritable with each other. Perhaps the proximity of land, however desolate and inhospitable that land was, had made us resent the imprisonment on shipboard; but that prison was now a refuge from immensity, and we rejoiced in each other's nearness. For instance, I already felt much more tolerant of Miss Ovenden, and I have no doubt that all my fellow-passengers experienced a corresponding change of outlook. These great watery spaces over which we must voyage for at least a month without perceiving so much as the breakers on a half-submerged reef, no matter in what direction our island lay, seemed to absorb the world we were leaving behind us, as sleep absorbs time. Already the gloom cast upon our spirits by those three deaths was a dim displeasure of years ago. We were like people who had discovered eternity and were asked to sigh for wasted moments in time.

And the ship herself, which had seemed to be cramping and inconvenient, to be a sounding-board for snores and unwelcome footsteps overhead, to creak and groan like an incurable rheumatic, to swing and sway out of a mere wanton delight in the discomfort it caused us, was now in her very smallness ample, in her noise cosy and reassuring, in her motion tenderly maternal. Maternal! Yes, there I have found the epithet for which I was searching. And we were like children grown old enough to realize that the tedious and protracted hours of youth are coming to an end and who are suddenly half afraid of being grown-up, like girls who shrink from putting up their hair or like boys who pause on the threshold of a barber's shop. We wanted now to cling to this mother, to recompense her for so much neglect and grumbling and disobedience by showing her that we were sensible of what she had done for us. We no longer fidgeted and regarded the ship as

a method of getting from one part of the world to another. We no longer sighed with boredom at the slow rate of her progress. We began to comprehend what she had achieved and, with every mile that her cutwater tossed to right and left in foam by day and in luminous ribbons by night, we loved and admired her more, for she seemed to us in her course as steadfast as a star.

We were in blue weather now, escorted by fleets of cumulus and snow-white birds, and with always such a sweet and melodious singing in the shrouds that we were ashamed to speak ill of our neighbors or to criticize our friends. Mostly we talked a good deal by starlight about our island; and we would often speak compassionately of England and hope, this I fancy was not quite sincere, that October there was not so cold as usual. Some of us would say how lovely October and even November could be in a woodland country, and others would agree; and then we would stretch our lengths on the warm deck and silently thank the burning stars above us that the Great Bear was buried and his frosty glimmer below the horizon.

Nothing mattered to me in these deep blue dazzling latitudes. I even read one of Miss Ovenden's books, and upon my word the people in it did not strike me as more ridiculous than the people who deliberately chose to inhabit London. I listened for hours at a time to Newton's tales, and if he had vowed that he had lived a week longer than Jonah in the belly of a whale (indeed I seem vaguely to remember that he did tell me something like that) I should only have murmured "What fun!" or "Did you really?" The antics of the flying fish and of the Cosway children were always a pleasure to watch. Hunt, encouraged by the spirit of companionship that wrapped us round and by the sense of equality that was forced upon us by the presence of

this leveling immensity of sea, was not ashamed to call himself a tailor. The actual occasion of the announcement was Jauncey's appearance in a white suit that I think must have been used at some time to stuff a cushion. It was such a network of wrinkles that Hunt begged to be allowed to take it in hand. He treated it so skilfully that Jauncey produced several more crumpled white suits and thence onward never wore that blue tail coat again, but walked up and down the deck looking like a brig. Bonney, too, went into white, and I wondered idly if Hunt had made him a suit out of his spare surplices, because for a week before he appeared in this new raiment Bonney used to retire with him at odd moments for mysterious interviews below. I thought at first that he might be preparing Hunt for confirmation, and asked Miss Titchener to tell me as a great secret if this were the case. She assured me that this could not be the reason of these hidden colloquies, because her brother-in-law had several times commented in terms of the warmest approbation upon Hunt's loyal churchmanship, which he would scarcely have done if he had not been confirmed. Then I asked her if Bonney had drawn on his surplices for material. Miss Titchener tapped my arm with her fan and told me not to be so profane, and, as I did not like to ask Hunt or Bonney, I never found out. But if those suits were not cut from surplices themselves, I am convinced that material intended for surplices was diverted to suits.

Of course, Miss Titchener and I were greater friends than ever, and we took a great deal of pleasure in watching the progress of Dick Duffy's love for Winifred.

"She may have taken a vow of celibacy," I said. "But I can't help feeling that she is encouraging that young man."

"My dear Mr. Marsham, do you know, I've several

times lately been on the point of making that very remark to you."

"And after all, why not?" I asked. "He's a well set up young fellow and would make her an excellent husband."

"My dear Mr. Marsham, do you know that you have taken the very words out of my mouth? In fact I've been quite worried about myself, because my brother-in-law would be so much upset if he thought that I was inclined to treat vows lightly. But really I cannot help feeling that Winifred was hardly old enough to realize what she was undertaking. Of course, at the time, we were all very pleased, because really her language when washing up had sometimes been quite uncomfortable, and our cook, who was a most respectable woman and a devout and regular communicant, said she simply could not stand Winifred's language. In fact she told us that either she or Winifred would have to leave. We were so sorry to lose her, though in one way it might have been worse, because, poor woman, she really couldn't cook at all. So then Winifred became cook, and really she did very well and was always reading Mrs. Beeton sometimes till twelve o'clock at night. And when the dear girl took this vow we were quite delighted. But now I'm so afraid it was a little premature, and as you say, it does look as if Winifred was encouraging young Duffy, which is so bad for Rose."

"We shall have to find a young man for Rose," I said.

"Oh, now really, Mr. Marsham, what things you do say! But certainly Rose is a girl with a very sweet nature."

"And a lovely complexion," I added.

"Yes, indeed, I'm sure. And I do hope that it won't be spoilt by the tropical climate. Now there's

Winifred talking to young Duffy again. Naughty girl!"

The talks I had promised myself with old Abel Hearne never occurred. Yet he was often at the wheel, and we used to vow that the ship sailed faster for him than for anybody else; but either the Captain, or Harper, or Yellowley was always around, and it was clear that nobody was going to be given a chance of drawing him out. I sometimes wondered if Geoffrey Ringshaw had been deliberately got rid of on account of some fancied indiscretion of the old man when they were drinking together. I had made up my mind now that we really were bound for an island, and I was perfectly sure that it was the same island on which the old man had been cast away. But why was there any longer any need of secrecy, now that we could not gossip of our destination in ports? It was a baffling business and there were moments even upon this enchanted ocean when I was oppressed by doubts and when I dreaded that some evil hazard awaited us beyond those clear horizons. I could not help such misgivings, because, with every day that brought us nearer to the island, I perceived in Harper the increasing joviality of one whose appetite is about to be satisfied, and in Hearne a sort of hard greed growing daily harder.

I asked Biscoe if he had noticed a difference in their attitude, and he admitted that he had fancied once or twice that he had perceived an indefinable change in both of them.

"Don't you think we ought to form some kind of a deputation and demand the name of the island?" I suggested. "If there is to be any foul play, it may be that some of us will escape and it will be imperative we should know where we are."

"Quite so," Biscoe agreed. "But even if they tell us the name of the island or the group for which we

are bound, how are we to know they are speaking the truth?"

"You are an authority on islands."

"At second hand," he reminded me.

"Yes, but you know enough to distinguish the Marquesas from the Austral Islands, for instance."

"I think I should recognize Nukuhiva," said Biscoe. "And I'm sure I should recognize Rapa. But I don't think I could tell Bora-Bora in the Society Group from Hiva Oa in the Marquesas. I fancy that I should realize it if we were steering a course through the Dangerous Archipelago. But if, though I don't think that very probable, they intend to land us on one of the Loyalty Islands or any of the New Hebrides I should have no notion where we were."

"Our course is always more west than north," I remarked. "Can't you possibly get into the chart-room on some excuse?"

"I've tried," he said. "But I was met with what is called a polite negative."

I was glad to hear from Biscoe that he had taken so much interest in our future and I congratulated him.

"Well, of course I'm interested," he said. "I want to know what sort of flora to expect."

"It strikes me that you're much more wrapped up in botany than geology nowadays. Yet at the Museum you were a geological expert."

"That's why I'm more interested in flowers now. I'm no longer in the Museum."

"To-day is the twenty-sixth of October," I went on. "We are due by our contract to reach the island on the second of November. I think that, if we find ourselves still at sea in another week, we shall have a good excuse for complaining to the Captain."

A week later we had sighted no land, and our course was W.N.W. I called a meeting of the prospective settlers and put it to them that we ought to make a few

inquiries. I was glad to find that the failure of the island to materialize on the date promised seemed to strike them definitely as a matter to be gone into with seriousness. Moreover, they were rather worried, because for the last week the allowance of water had been cut down. We had been rationed from the time it was decided not to call at Valparaiso, but until this week we had not felt the least inconvenience from this. I suggested that we should select a spokesman with a proviso that I was not to be chosen. I pointed out that I seemed to have a special knack of irritating the Captain and that anybody was a better choice than myself. I said that personally I was in favor of making Jauncey our spokesman, if he would consent to accept the position. He was chosen with acclamation, and within five minutes of his election he advanced to the bridge and asked Captain Hearne to come down and talk to us.

"Look here, where's this island?" he demanded without any preliminaries of politeness.

"You'll know in due course," said Hearne.

"That's not enough," said Jauncey, towering a full eight inches above the Captain.

"It's all you'll get," said Hearne.

"Is it, by G—?" Jauncey growled. "I'll teach you to answer me like that!"

He made a threatening move forward, whereupon the Captain without a moment's hesitation stepped forward and lifting that great mass of manhood off his feet shook him like a naughty child. I cannot be accused of a partiality for Captain Hawkyard Hearne, but his worst enemy could not have helped admiring that marvelous effort of strength and agility. In fact I nearly caught myself shouting, "Bravo!" Then he put Jauncey on his feet and held out his hand.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Jauncey, for having to do that. But I allow no man to threaten me in my own ship."

Poor Jauncey was dumfounded, and from that moment he fell back into his old habit of brooding, out of which nobody except George and Prudence Cosway could rouse him. I wished heartily that I had proposed Newton as our spokesman, but with all my experience of Hearne's strength I should never have believed that he could do what he did with Jauncey.

"Gentlemen," said the Captain, "I'm sorry that the *Octoroon* is a little behind time, but we are now less than fifteen hundred miles from the island and we may fairly expect to reach it in another fortnight."

Another fortnight! We had talked a great deal about the vastness of the Pacific; but it was that extra fortnight which staggered us, and the way Captain Hearne spoke of fifteen hundred miles as if it were the distance between two locks on the Thames.

"Yet after all," Biscoe reminded us, "you could drown all the five continents in this ocean. Haven't you ever noticed how absurdly small Australia looks in Mercator's Projection? Something like the Isle of Wight."

Soon after this I noticed one evening that the sun set on our starboard bow, and looking at the binnacle I saw that our course was W.S.W. Biscoe pored over a map of the South Pacific for several hours, and finally he announced to me that we must be in the Oldham Triangle."

"The Pons Asinorum, I should think," said I. "What's the Oldham Triangle?"

He pointed to a deep blue waste upon the map.

"It's six miles deep," he told me.

"But there are no islands in the whole of it" I objected.

"I've come to the conclusion that we're bound for the Balbec Group," Biscoe went on dreamily.

"Would you recognize it?"

"There are three islands: Perouse or Wednesday

Island, Macqueen Island, and Goat Island," he announced. "I think that they are all actively volcanic."

"Then of course that's where we're going!" I cried.

A week after this conversation, on a hot still morning, when the *Octoroon* was crawling through the sleek water, I went to pass the time of day with old Abel Hearne, who was at the wheel.

"If you throw your head back," he said to me, "you'll smell land."

But my senses were not so sharp as his, and I sniffed the air in vain.

"And which of the islands will give us our landfall?" I asked. "Macqueen Island is my guess."

The old man stared at me in amazement.

"For the love of J— C—!" he gasped. "Don't let Harry hear you say that name!"

And just then the lookout cried, "Land!"

CHAPTER XIV

WEDNESDAY ISLAND

THE landfall when we sighted the Madeiras early in the morning of a day that now seemed a century dead had been the first sharp experience of our voyage; the landfall when we first beheld the low tropic shores and fringing palms of South America had been a still sharper experience; but the emotion of this landfall after seven weeks of deep-water sailing, with not even the sight of another vessel hull down since we stood westward from the Gulf of Peñas, may not be expressed in words. That after weeks of doubt this land should be conjured from the water seemed as miraculous as in the Book of Genesis is made to seem the evocation of the world out of chaos.

"There you are, ladies and gentlemen," said Harper in the manner of a showman at a country fair. "There lies your island. Wednesday Island most people call it. Others who like to make themselves out a bit more knowing call it Perouse. And now if Captain Hearne could only give us a bit more wind, we should see in less than two hours if the island is all yours for the taking, or if there's to be any kind of an argument with those from whom the South Seas Settlement Company acquired the full rights of development."

I plucked Biscoe's sleeve on hearing these words.

"You were right in your guess," I said. "But listen to me, say nothing about Macqueen Island to any of the others, and least of all to the Captain. Don't ask me why now. I'll explain the reason when we are alone."

I had been so anxious to convey the sense of Abel Hearne's warning to Biscoe that I had scarcely paid attention to the queer way in which Harper had announced the end of our voyage half-way round the globe. It was only when I heard the rest of them asking each other what he meant by saying that we should soon know if all the island was ours that the queerness of the announcement struck me.

"There was surely never any question of our having the whole of an island, Mr. Harper," said Bonney. "I do not understand exactly what you mean. In fact, I think we all feel a little puzzled."

"Well, you'll have to stay puzzled for a little longer," the Captain interrupted brusquely. "And then at a suitable time I'll call on Mr. Harper to put the proposition before you in detail."

It seemed as if the ocean was reluctant to lose us, for what little wind there was died away as he spoke. The sails drooped limply, and the island remained no more than a dark and indeterminate shape on the horizon. Luckily the sky was overcast by a haze or we could never have borne the airless heat on deck.

At sunset we were if anything farther away from the island, and by dawn next day we had lost sight of it completely.

"Why don't you get up steam?" I heard Harper ask the Captain in a tone of some annoyance. "The quicker the one the quicker the other, isn't it?"

They walked away arguing together, and I suppose the bunkers must have been none too full owing to our avoiding Valparaiso. However, when at midday there was not a breath of wind we heard with relief the order given to stow the sails and raise the funnel. We had a hot and wearisome day waiting to get up steam, during which we were not vouchsafed another scrap of information about our future, and it was close upon midnight when we felt the welcome throbbing of the

screw. Nobody went to bed, because we had been told that we ought to drop anchor off the island by three o'clock. At last a gibbous moon rising in the wake of the ship lit up a lofty mass of land; and soon after six bells had been sounded the anchor was let go in a bay on the southeast extremity of the island. We crowded to the starboard rail and contemplated an arc of sandy beach running for about a mile between two jagged headlands. Above this the land appeared to rise in dense forest under a scaly silver sky.

We were silent with the awe of realization, and when suddenly the ship's hooter trumpeted we started like a lot of hysterical girls.

"Not a light nor a sound," I heard the Captain say to Harper, when after a series of these deafening blasts I had strolled forward to find out what kind of response was expected from the shore.

"I told you it was nap they wouldn't ever dare go back," Harper replied. "I said you could put all on that. They were still shaking when they landed in Auckland."

"Yes, if there was anybody in the homestead, they'd have heard us and be putting off by now sure enough," the Captain agreed.

Harper warned him of my approach with a nudge in the ribs.

"Well, we shall know in a minute," Hearne said genially. "Stand by there to lower the gig," he shouted.

At this moment his father, who had brought us to our anchorage, came up and asked if he had looked at the sky.

"Because it don't look at all nice to me," the old man said.

"How's the glass?"

"The glass hasn't moved yet," the old man replied. "But I didn't like the sly way the sun went down, and

I don't like the mackerels in the clouds, and each time the moon comes out the ring round her looks thicker. And I don't like that."

"Tell Sam to watch the glass," said Hearne. "If it drops a fraction he's to fire a shot. Ben and you and I are going ashore for a little while."

We none of us thought of bed, you may be certain, while that mysterious visit ashore was being made. We were all alert for the least sound from land, and if a volley of musketry had sounded a tattoo among the shadowy folds of those somber moon-blurred forests, we should have looked at one another and said each to his neighbor, "I told you so." Myself, I was enthralled with the imagination of old Abel Hearne's emotions when he stepped ashore on perhaps the very beach where he and his friend Harry Hawkyard had walked to see what they could pick up that Sunday morning in 1874, and I strained my eyes in the foolish fancy that I might be able to perceive even in this dim light those vapors issuing from fumaroles at the base of the cliffs. But then I began to think over what Abel Hearne had said when I mentioned Macqueen Island; I felt positive that the island to which we had been brought had played no part in that old story, unless, it might be, Abel Hearne had known of Wednesday Island, too, and . . . but then why all that secrecy? I went down to the cabin and looked at Biscoe's map. Yes, here were the Balbec Islands—three minute dots in the Pacific at least a hundred miles apart from each other. Macqueen Island and Goat Island formed the base of the triangle of which Wednesday Island was the apex. Should I ever solve the mystery? Should I ever touch the real heart of the secret?

When I returned on deck, I found everybody in a commotion and George Cosway being harried with questions because his sister was missing.

"I don't know where she is," he declared.

"But, George, you must know," Mrs. Bonney insisted severely.

"Pray do not worry yourself, dear Mrs. Bonney," Cosway said. "I do not feel the very slightest anxiety about the child. Wherever she is, she will be perfectly able to look after herself. I do beg you not to bother yourself. George, if I find that you are responsible for your sister's getting into any particularly outrageous piece of mischief, I shall put you to weeding the lawn in front of our bungalow as soon as we arrive. You will then be allotted the most menial work I can think of. You will wash up, wait at table——"

"Thanks! Anything else?" George asked.

"But, seriously, my boy, where is your sister?"

"I tell you I don't *know.*"

"But you might guess?"

"I might guess that she smuggled herself into the boat and went ashore," said George in the accents of a Sibyl.

I fancy that we were all a bit jealous of Prudence's taking the bull of curiosity by the horns in this way, and so we were all suitably shocked.

"What do you mean—you might guess?" Cosway demanded. "You either do know or you don't know."

"Well, I don't *know,"* George insisted. "All I *know* is that she was reading about Jim Hawkins in *Treasure Island* and said that she'd like to do what he did when we got to the island and I said, 'You little ass, a girl couldn't do that.' And she said, 'Yes I can, so sucks to you!' I didn't think she could do it, but if she could, I wasn't going to be a cad and spoil her sport."

I did not suppose that even Hearne or Harper would be likely to maltreat Prudence, and as her father did not seem to be worrying himself we gave up fussing. It was nearly four o'clock when we heard

the sound of oars and saw the gig pulling back to the yacht.

"Have you seen Prudence?" we called.

"Prudence?" the Captain repeated in amazement.

A shrill voice from the gig cried:

"George, you beastly cad, you sneaked!"

"I didn't sneak, you squealing baby!"

"You did, you did, you did, you did!"

The argument continued until the gig was alongside; and it might have continued all night, if Jauncey had not presented George's behavior to his sister in a more favorable light and effected a reconciliation. I noticed that Hearne was scowling at first; but presently, when George asked her what she did ashore and she had to confess that she had not moved from where she had been hidden in the bows, his face cleared. I thought to myself that he might have been wondering how much she had overheard of what I have no doubt would have been a most instructive discussion.

"You're a fine Jim Hawkins," her brother jeered. "I suppose you were too funky to explore."

"Jim Hawkins went on shore in the daytime," Prudence pointed out. "You can't explore an island at night, you fool."

"Prudence, my dear child," Mrs. Bonney interposed. "I do wish you wouldn't use that horrid word."

"Awfully sorry, Mrs. Bonney. But George won't ever admit that I can do anything. And I did hide in the boat."

The argument was in danger of beginning over again; but Harper stepped forward and invited us all down into the saloon to hear what he had to say about the Settlement. Champagne was produced, which gave Miss Titchener quite a shock, so she assured me in a whisper.

"Still after a long voyage and so far away, perhaps a sip is permissible." And then she added inconse-

quently: "I never can remember if it's four o'clock yesterday afternoon in England at this moment, or four o'clock this afternoon."

Perhaps she was trying to square her conscience for drinking Champagne in the Antipodes at four o'clock in the morning.

"Ladies and gentlemen," Harper began when we were all seated. "Your wanderings are over. The Promised Land is yours. Captain Hearne and myself wish to thank you very heartily on behalf of the South Seas Settlement Company for your patience and—er—fortitude during what we venture to hope, with all its little incidental trials and tragedies and tribulations, has been an—er—prosperous and pleasant voyage. We have now to very reluctantly and with many apologies inform you that in several minor details the settlement offered you for settling differs slightly from the description given of it in the prospectus circulated in London."

"I thought it would," Cosway interposed with a chuckle.

"One moment, Mr. Cosway," said Harper, holding up that curiously authoritative hand of his. "One moment, if you please! The difference is entirely in your favor, for while there are not quite so many bungalows as we led you to expect . . ."

"I knew it!" Cosway ejaculated.

"Please, Mr. Cosway, I must ask you to permit me to proceed without interruptions. Although, as I say, the bungalows are fewer than we led you to expect, there *are* two bungalows fully furnished, and the land at your disposal includes the whole area of the island, which is roughly seven thousand acres. Of this you will find at least fifty acres already planted with mangoes, pawpaws, custard-apples, rose-apples, mummy-apples, pineapples, citrons, oranges, lemons, bananas, sugarcane, et cetera, et cetera, and et cetera. It is pro-

posed to proceed with landing you and your baggage at half-past-seven punctually to-morrow morning. We shall then proceed to water the ship and take in a few necessary supplies of greenstuff. After that we have some business at one or two other islands which is expected to occupy us a month or six weeks. The *Octoroon* will then return to Wednesday Island, and any settlers who are dissatisfied with what we have provided for them will be given a free passage to England on condition that they agree to forfeit the £500 and give the Company in writing a full quittance for that sum before leaving the island. I hope that I have made the position of the Company perfectly clear. Ladies and gentlemen, settlers and—er—settleresses —ha-ha! I raise my glass to the health and prosperity of Wednesday Island!"

Of course we all had excited questions to ask, and we learned that there were no other inhabitants of the island, that there had been two families of settlers until about a year ago but that they had left, and that Harper with the idea of floating the South Seas Settlement Company had given them a sum down for their houses and tools and furniture. He had not explained the circumstances with perfect accuracy before, because he had been afraid of attracting too much attention to such a valuable property and exciting the cupidity of the tax-gatherer and the grandmotherly interference of the Colonial Office. The suggestion that the island was in the French zone of influence was not strictly accurate. The island was British. No, he would not deny that the question of finding a ready market for produce was perhaps a little more complicated than at first it had seemed.

"And if we decline to accept your offer, Mr. Harper?" I asked. "If we insist upon being taken back to England immediately?"

Harper drummed upon the table.

"I've made it quite clear, Mr. Marsham, that we shall not be ready to take you back to England for at least six weeks and possibly not for two months."

"But if we decline to land?" I pressed.

I wanted to make him use a threat of compulsion to see what my companions would say to that, but he was not to be drawn.

"I do not think that, when you see the island basking in the rays of to-morrow morning's sun, you will want to do anything but go ashore at once and stay there for the rest of your natural life. You'll observe quite plainly from the yacht the two bungalows nestling among a luscious display of tropical verdure. You'll only have one idea, and that will be to get settled in as soon as possible. Take my word for it, Mr. Marsham, you won't think twice again of returning to England, home, and duty. Take my word for it, my dear sir."

"We took your word in London," I reminded him.

Hearne had not spoken all this while; but now he rose to his feet.

"Is there anybody here who would have refused to come, if he had been told what Mr. Harper has told him to-night?"

We looked at each other in silence, for this question was really unanswerable except in the negative.

And then the champagne-glasses on the table suddenly chinked, and through the open ports we heard the sea breaking more loudly on the beach.

Sam Yellowley came running into the saloon and shouted:

"Captain, the glass has fallen three-tenths and the swell's rising and there's mare's-tails across the moon and Mr. Hearne says if you're going to get the baggage ashore you ought to be starting right away, because he reckons we haven't more than an hour or two for landing, and perhaps not that much."

I thought at first that this was a trick to bounce us out of further argument; but when I reached the deck I heard McMorris being urged to unbank his fires quicker than he knew how, if he did not want to see the ship piled up on the beach. There was not a breath of wind; but every minute or so the *Octoroon* shivered as a long low swell crept into the bay. It was that swell more than any eloquence of Harper's, I think, which led them all to accept their settlement without more discussion; there was something too menacing about that furtively creeping swell, and everyone was eager to get ashore as soon as possible. Yet I was hating to surrender so easily to Hearne and Harper, and on my way down to the cabins Prudence took hold of my arm and asked me why Captain Hearne disliked me so much.

"What makes you ask that?"

"Well, when I was in the boat I heard him call you the most dreadful names to Harper."

"Oh, he did, did he?"

"Yes, and he said he would be jolly glad to see the last of you forever."

"Oh, he said that, did he?"

"Yes, he did and he used simply frightful language."

With this she ran off to finish her packing.

After what Prudence had told me, I felt more deeply resentful than ever of letting those rascals get away with it so easily. In addition to my curiosity about Macqueen Island all the contrariness of my nature was roused, and I felt that somehow I must know the real secret of this affair. In a flash I determined to copy Prudence on a larger scale and to conceal myself on board until we reached Macqueen Island, for surely that must be where the yacht was bound. I felt that I would rather die than not know what was going to happen there. I would tell Andersen to say that I had

gone ashore if any questions were asked about my whereabouts. But when I got to the cabin I found Andersen's clothes carefully folded up and the following note pinned on top:

Dear Sir!

In thanking you for your great kindness I wish to say I have taken the liberty of returning to NATURE. Dear Sir! when I was on deck and you were below talking I could not wait any longer and I have swam ashore when you get this. I know that I am treating you badly but I could not wait and I was afraid you would wish me to go on as your servant and I feel that I must return to NATURE at once. I hope you will forgive me because it is more than I can stand to wait any longer. I am sorry I disgraced myself in Bahere but I hope I have given general satisfaction and I am very grateful and I will always pray for you, and I am

Yours respectfully,

E. Andersen.

The initiative displayed by my ex-valet struck me as exemplary. He had known from the time he had addressed me outside the office in Panton Street that he wanted to return to the South Seas and Nature. He had achieved both his ambitions. Apart from that one lapse in Bahia he had fulfilled his pledge to me most straightly, and I wished him well. His abrupt departure had the effect of confirming my resolution to see this adventure through to the end. Curiosity, that erysipelas of the mind, was tormenting me with its fire, and dangerous though the cure might be I was determined to try it. The confused sounds I heard all about me of preparations for leaving the ship only encouraged me to persevere with my project. "And if it comes to personal violence," I thought, "did I not kill that Indian and could I not defend myself against Harper and Hearne?"

Meanwhile, I planned to go ashore in one of the first boats and gratify as much of my curiosity about the Settlement as I had time. I could do this conspicuously, and with any luck I might return to the ship unnoticed in the confusion of the final embarkations.

When I went on deck again, there was still not a breath of wind, nor was the swell noticeably stronger. I found Harper helping to escort Mrs. Bonney and Miss Titchener ashore, and I asked if there was any objection to my coming too. There was none. In fact, Harper invited me with a kind of triumphant cordiality to jump into the boat. On nearing the shore I saw that the former settlers had constructed a curved breakwater of rough boulders which, though not an ideal landing-place, was better than nothing, and we did not have so much difficulty as I had anticipated in extracting Mrs. Bonney and Miss Titchener from the boat. I am extremely susceptible to the atmosphere of a place at the moment of my first impression, and the atmosphere of Wednesday Island did not strike me as hostile when we made our way across the beach to a road that wound gently uphill under what looked like a grove of palms.

"Coconuts?" I asked.

"No, no," said Harper. "Coconuts won't grow here. Too far south."

"But the prospectus . . ." I began.

"To tell you the truth, Mr. Marsham, that prospectus was written some years ago for some land I was trying to develop in Ua Pu, one of the Marquesas, which was where I drifted after I had my little trouble with the Reverend William Jenkins."

The expectation of getting us all ashore so easily was loosening Harper's tongue.

"Yes, I'd had them printed, and when this other

proposition came along, I hadn't the heart to waste so much time and money and paper and as I couldn't precisely blare it about that I intended to colonize Wednesday Island, I thought they might as well be made use of."

"There are no snakes, are there?" asked Miss Titchener suddenly, who with her sister was following behind us.

"I have been assured that there is absolutely no kind of noxious insect or reptile on the island," said Harper. "But we have already reached the first of the two homesteads, as the former inhabitants used to call them. Welcome, Mrs. Bonney! Welcome, Miss Titchener! In the name of the South Seas Settlement Company, welcome!"

We passed along a tangled garden-path through air strongly perfumed with a scent like heliotrope and entered a substantial one-storied dwelling built of logs. On Harper's lighting a candle from a packet on a table, we found ourselves in a large room lined with varnished planks. The room was well furnished, and there were even pictures on the walls.

"Just as it was left," he said. "There are five or six bedrooms leading off this room, and there's another homestead a hundred yards further up the hill every bit as commodious and comfortable as this one."

"But what made them leave it like this?" I asked. There was an uncanny feeling that the proprietors would suddenly come in and surprise us.

"They got tired of the loneliness," said Harper. "There were two families, and they took to squabbling among themselves. So when I came along and said I was willing to buy, they were only too glad to sell. 'Lock, stock, and barrel, mind,' said I. And lock, stock, and barrel it was. But I mustn't stay gossiping here. If you'll kindly remain and look after the

ladies, Mr. Marsham, I'll get back to the ship and show the way to the next lot of arrivals."

The room smelt musty, and when I threw open the windows to let in the first gray air of dawn I fancied that the breakers were booming louder and crashing more frequently upon the beach.

"I do hope that Winifred and Rose won't forget to pack anything important," Mrs. Bonney said, whereupon she and her sister fell into a brisk conversation about the various articles that might so easily get overlooked in the hurry of departure. I asked the ladies if they would mind my exploring the garden while they talked, and promised I would not go far until some of the others arrived. They agreeably consented to my ungallant retreat, and I went outside to drench myself in the powerful perfume of heliotrope and to meditate beneath the dripping branches of unfamiliar trees upon the history of the two families who had cultivated this remote island, wondering, as I had often wondered, if people are mad, because they live on small islands; or if they live on small islands because they are mad. Harper's tale sounded plausible enough so far as this island was concerned, and perhaps after all the story of that old man of the sea had misled me into supposing that there was anything deeper behind the averred intention of this expedition. Perhaps my original story that he had killed his friend was right. But then why had he been brought so carefully and so secretly all this way? Yet, even that was explicable on the plain facts of the case, for if Harper had indulged in a little sharp practice with the former tenants of this wilderness, it was natural that he and his partner should be afraid of leaving the old man behind to gabble in his cups. If the warnings of a storm had come earlier, they would have had an excellent excuse for not standing by with the *Octoroon,* and Harper need never have

mentioned that cruise round the islands which was to last a month or six weeks. But of that cruise I must know the secret. Presently I saw several more of the settlers coming up the path like shadows in the gray light, and heard Miss Ovenden saying:

"I feel so like Eve in the Garden of Eden. I always think that Eve was such a pagan, and, of course poor Adam had the nonconformist conscience."

"Need Adam be brought into it?" asked Miss Arnhoe. I hurried past them down to the beach with some vague excuse and was rowed back to the ship, watching in the east a cloud blacker than the darkness retreating over the island, its topmost rim splashed with blood.

On board all was noise and confusion. The glass had fallen much lower; the swell was perceptibly heavier and more frequent. It looked as if it would soon be time to wear the ship's bows to meet the weather, and that would make further embarkation impossible. In fact, nearly all the boats had already been hoisted back on board, and the donkey-engine for getting up the anchor was puffing officiously. I met Bonney running along the deck shouting:

"Never mind about Mrs. Bonney's cabin-trunk. It is most essential that my portable altar should go with this boat. My portable altar! My portable altar must not on any account be left behind!"

"There's going to be a bit of a blow, Marsham," Newton observed sapiently. "And I know what a blow means in these latitudes. You may or may not believe me, but I was once blown off my feet two hundred yards, and if I hadn't had the luck to fall into a tree, I might have given myself a very nasty knock. As it was, I only sprained my wrist. I've just changed into these disreputable old togs. Don't look shocked. It's no good dressing up in glad rags to do pioneer work. Aren't you going ashore in this boat?"

I hurried past him and ran into Hunt, who was carrying a mosquito-net over one arm and a rifle over his shoulder.

"Just in case," he said to me grimly. "By Jove, Mr. Marsham, I intend to be on the quee vive to-night."

"The sea is getting very nasty," I warned him. "You'd better get ashore as soon as possible. Do you know if Mr. Biscoe has gone yet?"

"Mr. Biscoe has already left the ship, sir," said Dick Duffy, who was standing by the gangway and superintending the loading of the boat. I was struck by his strange expression in the sickly air of dawn; but I supposed that he was feeling anxious about the boat in the rising seas.

"We shan't hardly get another boat off, sir," he said. "You'd best be quick, if you don't mean to be taken on wherever we're going."

I looked at him quickly, thinking that he had divined my intention of trying to stay on board, and murmuring an excuse about having left something behind in my cabin I hurried off.

As it happened I need not have worried about stowing myself away, for I had barely reached the saloon-hatchway when I heard the Captain cry in a voice of thunder, "Give way, the last boat!" and in the same moment the wind began to play a devil's concert in the rigging. My curiosity vanished in a sudden panic at being left behind, and I ran back to jump into that last boat. But I was too late; she was already making for the shore on the crest of a mighty roller when I reached the gangway and there found Biscoe and Rose Allen looking as frightened as no doubt I looked myself.

"I thought you had gone ashore, Biscoe."

"I did go ashore once, but I forgot my *Typee* and came back for it."

"And you, Rose, you ought to have gone long ago."

"I was packing for Miss Titchener, sir. Winifred managed to get into the boat, but I was too late, sir, and it couldn't get near enough for me to jump."

"Well, never mind," I said. "There'll have to be another boat after all."

"Yes, there will, by hell!" said Hearne, furiously answering. "Where's that fool Duffy?"

"Duffy was in the last boat," Biscoe told him.

The wind by now was tremendous, and the waves were rolling in like mountains. It was obviously impossible to launch another boat and equally impossible that the boat coxed by Dick Duffy should ever put out again. In fact, it looked to be stove in, but those who were in it were safe ashore and we could see Dick Duffy wth his arm round Winifred's waist, helping her up the beach.

"Sam!" the Captain yelled above the wind.

"Aye, aye, sir!"

"That bastard Duffy has deserted the ship! He did it deliberately to get off with that b——h of a girl!"

"Ah, I wouldn't wonder if he didn't," said Yellowley.

"I'll pay him for that one day!" Hearne vowed, shaking his fist at the shore.

"And now you —— passengers," he cried, turning to us, "Get below! Whatever happens you've brought on yourselves! Get below," he shouted again. "Batten down the hatches, Mr. Yellowley. Batten the ——s down, Sam. By God Almighty, if the ship goes to hell, they shall go to hell with it!"

With heads lowered against the thrumming wind we staggered along the deck to the after hatchway, and reached the saloon. Rose was going to leave us together and retire to her cabin, but I bade her sit down with us, for I thought the poor girl would be

frightened to stay alone in this fury of sound about the quivering ship.

We sat for I do not know how long, too nervous to talk; and then at last we felt the vibration of the screw. Pitching horribly, the *Octoroon* fought her way out.

CHAPTER XV

THE EFFECT OF A HURRICANE

WHEN now I look back to those hours we spent under hatches in the *Octoroon* and in tranquillity try to recollect the horrible experience, I must go back to an early adventure at the seaside for a parallel to what I suffered. When I was about five or six years old, I spent several weeks with my nurse to recuperate from some childish malady at Great Yarmouth. In those days the switchback was, I believe, a novelty. Anyway, my nurse had never traveled on one, and certainly not myself. I suppose I must have pestered her until she agreed to essay the experience of being as I thought so delightfully whirled along in silhouette against the sky. We ascended the great skeleton that sprawled along the edge of the sands. I can still recapture the sensation of the hot threepenny bit I held tightly in my hand all the way up to pay my fare at the top. We got into the car and leapt into space. I shudder now at the recollection of even that first comparatively gentle downward swoop; but the memory of that long sickening penultimate dive, when nurse and I clung to each other in frozen horror, appalls me. On alighting and being told that we had to make a return journey, she refused to get into the car. I supported her with such loud cries of distress and such paroxysms of terrified sobs that, since it was not practicable to descend to earth from this end of the switchback, we were finally allowed to slide and scramble back on our feet

along those diabolical waves of timber. Alas, there was no getting out of the *Octoroon* and walking back over the waves to Wednesday Island.

Soon after we began steaming into the hurricane, Biscoe tried to cheer up our spirits by giving Rose and myself a lecture on the habits of revolving storms. I can hear him now!

"What you have to do is to remember that in the Northern Hemisphere the wind revolves against the hands of your watch, but in the Southern Hemisphere (where of course we are) in the same direction as the hands of your watch. What you want to do is to ascertain whether you are in the right-hand semicircle, the left-hand semicircle, or the center. To do this you face the wind and observe in what direction it shifts. If it shifts to your right-hand in the Southern Hemisphere. . . ."

The time had come to stop this lecture and, picking up the volume of *Typee* which had brought Biscoe back to the yacht, I threw it at him as hard as I was able in my tremulous condition. It missed him and fell on the floor, and I remember that Rose bent over and picked it up and put it carefully back on the table. That was the instinctive discipline of the professional soldier in a moment of great danger—the kind of deed that upon the battlefield gains a medal for valor. Poor girl, it was her last effort, immediately after which she had to retire, her complexion most unbecomingly mottled by seasickness. I may add that Biscoe and I soon followed her example.

On taking up my pen to relate the events of that day, I was tempted to expatiate upon the misery of our state both for my own pleasure and the pleasure of my readers, because I had been thinking with what sensuous enjoyment one reads a book like Basil Lubbock's *Round the Horn before the Mast.* How delicious it is to read that epic of discomfort with one's

legs on the mantelpiece, a bright fire on the hearth, and not even a draught under the door. But then I realized that such discomfort is only delightful because one knows that one will never really experience it. It is a kind of inconvenient castle in Spain that one builds for other people to live in, not for one's own self. For most of us seasickness is only too feasible a horror, and just as I do not care to read a book in which people lose all their money, so I fancy that seasickness with its loss of everything including self-respect is not a subject upon which to dilate in literature. The sufferings of Biscoe and myself in a South Seas hurricane were probably no more acute than the sufferings of many tourists during a Channel crossing. We had of course the consciousness of our grave danger added to our physical discomfort, but if anything this was a mild palliative of the agony we so unmanfully endured, and I think that I shall be in better taste if I say no more about our feelings.

We both tossed about in limp despair like two clots of butter in a churn. Our wills were as negligible as the wills of two old envelopes in a mill-race.

Hours passed. Days, weeks, months, years, lustrums, decades, centuries, millenniums, æons passed. At last, where I lay prostrate in my bunk, I was conscious of Biscoe saying:

"I think we must be out of the semicircle. It seems a little quieter."

"Semicircle?" I repeated. "Are you seriously prepared to maintain that the involutions and convolutions and circumvolutions to which my inside has been gyrating for æons can be expressed by such a comparatively simple shape as a semicircle?"

"The wind itself does not revolve in semicircles. It has a spiral movement, inwards, toward the center," Biscoe explained.

"That I can well believe!"

"Yes, it's distinctly calmer," he went on. "But of course that may only mean we are now in the very center of the storm. In which case in a short time the wind will blow just as strongly from the opposite direction."

I groaned.

"And it will be rougher than ever with high pyramidal seas," he announced.

"Pyramidal!" I exclaimed. "Do not be silly, Biscoe. The seas have already been Himalayan. The introduction of the Pyramids for the purpose of comparison is bathos after what we have experienced. What's the time?"

"I forgot to wind up my watch in the excitement of last night."

"So did I. But it must be getting late afternoon," I said.

The motion really was considerably less, and I suggested that one of us ought to go and see how that poor girl was getting on. Biscoe at once jumped out of his bunk and said that he would go. He was away for quite half an hour, and I was on the point of getting up to see if anything serious was the matter, when he came back.

"She's much better," he announced. "Quite recovered, in fact. She has got back her color in the most extraordinary way. Of course, she's very much worried over what Mrs. Bonney will think, and her sister. But I told her that I would explain matters when we found them again, and she cheered up. That's a very nice girl, Marsham. Very sensible and very plucky. It must have been the deuce of an ordeal for her."

"Yes," I said meditatively. "And I doubt if her ordeal is over yet."

"What do you mean?"

"You talk about explaining matters when we find

them again. When do you think that we shall find them again?"

"I imagine as soon as the weather permits."

"I may be an alarmist, Biscoe, but I've a notion that we shall visit Macqueen Island before we see Wednesday Island again."

He asked my reasons, and I told him everything I knew.

"I'm so positive," I concluded, "that the *Octoroon* is bound for Macqueen Island that when I came back on board this morning I intended to stow myself away to gratify my curiosity. At the last minute I funked it; but Fate has taken pity on my cowardice, and I've a notion that I shall see Macqueen Island willy-nilly. And, Biscoe, after what I've told you, aren't you anxious to see the end of this affair?"

"I'm not convinced that the affair is going to be so wonderfully interesting," he replied. "It strikes me that it's you who are always looking for romance and adventure these days. Besides, even if they do intend to visit Macqueen Island, they'll never take us with them if the mystery is half as wonderful as you think. They wouldn't go to all this trouble to keep an important secret and then give the show away, because a hurricane caught them napping."

"My dear Biscoe," I said, "for one thing, Harper and Hearne don't want to involve themselves with the settlers until they've finished their own business. Secondly, they haven't enough coal to cruise about these islands indefinitely. Thirdly, it may be weeks before it is possible to land anybody again on Wednesday Island."

"Or on Macqueen Island, if it comes to that," Biscoe argued. "Besides, what is the business they have to finish? You haven't yet suggested any possible business that could take them to another island. Give me a theory that I can work on, and I'll see how the

evidence fits in. Your idea is that old Abel Hearne murdered this shipmate of his. If he did, why on earth does his son want to go near the island?"

"I'm not tied to that theory," I said. "That was only one possible explanation."

"Then give me another."

I produced one in desperation, and as I developed it I began to persuade myself that at last I had solved the mystery.

"There are two men and a girl all alone on an island," I began. "You allow that to be true? I can assure you that if you'd heard the old man tell his tale, you would have been convinced he was speaking the truth."

"Oh, yes, I allow that somewhat fantastic situation."

"The two men both fall in love with the girl, whose name, by the way, was Rose."

"Which reminds me," Biscoe interrupted. "I think I'll go and see if she's all right."

"If you'd go and ask her to make us a cup of tea, it would be more to the point."

While he was away, I was developing my new theory, and I had it pat by the time he came back with some biscuits and actually a cup of tea.

"She really is an awfully good girl, that," he said. "Well trained, you know. We tried to find the steward and discovered him at last, dead drunk on his back in the galley. She was as plucky as anything, dug out a spirit-lamp, and got our tea as if it was five o'clock in the afternoon at the Vicarage."

"Well, for the moment, let's leave the virtues of our Rose and come back to that other Rose. As I was saying, both these men fell in love with her, and Rose picked Hawkyard. Yet for some reason or other, when the whaler *Southern Bride* rescued them after two years, Hawkyard stayed behind. Why?

The girl was his. What made him give her up to Hearne? It doesn't sound reasonable. Yes, I'm positive that Hearne must have killed his shipmate."

"But that was your first theory," Biscoe complained. "I daresay it may be true, but it doesn't give you the least reason to suppose that the Hearnes want to go near Macqueen Island, if that really was the scene of all this blood and thunder."

"Wait a minute," I said. "Suppose the Captain is not old Hearne's son at all, but the son of the dead man? And suppose that his mother—who presumably is dead also—told him the truth? And suppose that he could claim some property or money if he could prove the death of Hawkyard, and suppose that there exists on Macqueen Island some document which makes him the rightful heir . . ."

"Marsham, Marsham!" Biscoe protested. "I really did not believe you capable of this. It's too ridiculously far-fetched. Surely if it were to Hearne's advantage to prove himself the illegitimate son of a dead seaman, wouldn't it also be to his advantage to give the greatest publicity possible to his investigations? And how does our friend Harper fit in with this extravagant theory?"

"My notion is that Harper found out about the settlement on Wednesday Island having been abandoned, that he discussed with Hearne a project to make a bit of money over it, and that Hearne saw in this project the chance he had so long wanted of getting to the Balbecs. There is obviously something most fishy about that abandoned settlement on Wednesday Island."

"Oh, yes, I'll agree with you there. But I think you're utterly out over Macqueen Island. It may long ago have played an important part in the history of the Hearne family; but if it did, depend upon it the natural explanation of any present secrecy is their

determination to keep Macqueen Island from coming into the picture. So far from visiting Macqueen Island, they'd prefer to think it did not exist."

The argument was brought to an end by Rose's tapping at the door of the cabin and saying:

"Please, might I speak to Mr. Biscoe a minute?"

He hurried out with alacrity, and I followed him when I thought the conversation had lasted long enough.

"Rose wants me to see if we can't get into communication with somebody," Biscoe explained. "Otherwise she's afraid that our dinner will never be ready. Do you know it's after seven?"

"Well, Rose," I said cheerfully, "I'm afraid you've had rather a bad time."

She blushed.

"Yes, sir, I was rather upset. It's very upsetting when the ship moves up and down so quickly."

"I shall tell Miss Titchener how brave you were," I announced benevolently.

"Thank you, sir. I'm only hoping Mrs. Bonney won't be very cross with me. The Vicar was so worried about his altar that Mrs. Bonney's cabin-trunk got left to the last minute before they fetched it. I didn't like to go away and leave it, in case the men should come. I was took quite by surprise when they shouted down that the last boat was going."

"Well, that's all over," said Biscoe, who had been fidgeting in the background during this speech. "But now, Rose, you'd better come along with me and see what we can find in the galley. I daresay you're hungry."

"No, sir, I'm not very hungry, thank you, sir."

We sat down to an excellent dinner at about nine o'clock. I suggested a little maliciously to Biscoe that we should invite Rose to sit down with us.

"Oh, no; I think not, Marsham. I think it would

embarrass her. She's a thoroughly well-trained girl, you know, and I don't think she'd like that. I only went out to help her in the galley because of that brute of a steward. It's not nice for a girl to be alone with a drunken nigger, though I think he's too far gone to stir a finger."

Rose waited on us during dinner, and she then retired to her own cabin. In the morning she tapped at our door with hot water, and we were both enthusiastic about her efficiency.

"English maids are not usually so adaptable," I said.

"Certainly not the ones you get in lodgings," Biscoe agreed. "I've known some terrors."

It was beginning to get unpleasantly warm under hatches; and since, to judge by the gentle motion of the yacht, we were evidently well out of the track of the storm, we could not imagine why we were kept below. It was close on midday when we heard sounds in the neighborhood of the after hatch that seemed to indicate our release. Presently Harper came below and asked us, it would be more correct to say told us, to come up on deck and speak to the Captain.

It was delicious to breathe fresh air again and to behold the ocean once more as blue and sparkling as for so many weeks we had grown accustomed to see it; but what a moment later made us open our eyes really wide was the sight of land on the starboard bow.

"Your destination, gentlemen," Harper announced.

"Macqueen Island!" I exclaimed.

His globular eyes bulged angrily.

"Oh, no, that isn't Macqueen Island," he said. "That's a much quieter place than Macqueen. A regular rest-cure that will be for overwrought nerves. Here are the prisoners, Captain Hearne," he added;

and though I supposed that he was cracking a joke, I did not altogether relish the tone of his voice.

"Listen," Hearne said harshly, and without giving us so much as a good day. "It was in my mind yesterday evening to pitch you both overboard and so pay you out for the mean trick you tried to play on me. But Mr. Harper interceded for you, and you owe your lives to him."

I was well able to believe that Hearne was in deadly earnest, and I thanked the stars that had made Harper not less of a blackguard than his partner, I fancy, but perhaps a more cautious blackguard. Biscoe, unlike myself, evidently regarded the interview as a rather stupid joke.

"I'm perfectly serious, Mr. Biscoe," the Captain assured him. "There's Goat Island ahead. I've never landed there, and, the devil willing, I never intend to land there. The sailing directions say that there is a provision depôt for shipwrecked mariners, an abundance of fish and crabs near the shore, and lots of wild goats. I don't know how long it will be before a ship takes you off, but I daresay not a very great while. The alternative to Goat Island is the sea. You'd better be quick and make up your mind which you prefer."

Biscoe seemed to comprehend at last that Hearne was speaking in earnest, and he protested loudly:

"But this is monstrous, Captain Hearne. It's—it's criminal. Why don't you take us back to Wednesday Island? And what about Mrs. Bonney's maid?"

"The girl will go with you," said Hearne. "If you've got any baggage left on board, we'll put that ashore for you. I'll leave you what arms you have. Mr. Marsham will be quite a pistol-shot when he's had a little practice with the goats. You'd better get packed up and be ready to go ashore. I can't keep the ship waiting long."

An hour later Biscoe, Rose, and myself found ourselves with our baggage on a small sandy beach at the base of towering cliffs, with the *Octoroon* already out of sight round the first headland.

"How are we going to get up to the high land?" I asked.

"By the lava cascade above that corrugated iron hut," said Biscoe.

At the mention of lava I looked anxiously for fumaroles in the cliffs.

"Do you think that this island is actively volcanic?" I asked.

"It may be," said Biscoe calmly. "However, I'll soon be able to tell!"

That was something to be thankful for. I always had a sneaking fondness for Ernest in the *Swiss Family Robinson,* and I should think when he grew up that he was like Biscoe.

"Well, Rose," I said, "you never expected to find yourself marooned on a desert island, I'll wager."

"I'm afraid Mrs. Bonney will be very cross about it, sir."

We decided that the first thing to do was to examine the inside of the provision depôt. Sacks of biscuits, tins of meat and condensed milk, bottles of lime juice floated before my fancy. The hut was absolutely bare; and we looked at one another in dismay.

"Well, it's no good waiting down here," said Biscoe. "We'd better climb up the cascade and take a look at the lie of the country on top of the island."

It was not actually a difficult ascent, though steep and tiring in the heat. When we reached the top, we saw that the island consisted of undulating downs covered with a smooth sward of grass and intersected by small gullies and dry water-courses. There were a few stunted trees and wind-blown shrubs in the hollows, and sheer cliffs at least five or six hundred feet

high between the grassy uplands and the sea. A flock of red-fronted parrakeets were pecking at the seeds of some small composite plant a few paces from where we stood, so tamely and unsuspiciously as to prove that man was a rare migrant here.

The *Octoroon,* fast leaving the island astern, seemed to belong less to our life now than a solitary frigate-bird that wheeled about the face of the cliffs below and greeted us with melancholy cries.

CHAPTER XVI

GOAT ISLAND

I SUPPOSE that most people have considered in their day-dreams what they would do and how they would live if they found themselves cast away upon a desert island. So he who sets out to recount an actual experience of the fact is likely to find himself handicapped by the popular prejudice on the subject unless he conforms to the behavior expected of him. In justice to my own rendering of the part of a castaway, which will meet, I fear, with general contempt, I must first of all point out—for the moment I shall leave my fellow-sufferers out of the story—that I was not wrecked upon Goat Island. I lacked the exaltation of struggling up a beach out of the very fangs of the sea and of lying unconscious for I do not know how many hours until a lovely Indian maid or a turtle or a crab, or any common object of the seashore you like to think of restored me to life. I did not murmur "water" and relapse into semi-consciousness until a refreshing draught was poured down my throat. I was not under the slightest obligation to Providence for saving me when all my shipmates were drowned; and so I missed the sensation of looking at my tattered garments and kneeling down upon the burning sand to thank Heaven humbly for the mercy accorded to the least worthy of mortals. Here was a situation with which my reading from earliest boyhood had prepared me to deal, and I found myself without a single one of the emotions appropriate to the occasion. But I can tell you ex-

actly what I did feel. I felt as if I had taken the wrong train by mistake, had alighted in nervous agitation at the first station after I had discovered my error, and had found myself stranded ten miles from the nearest village, with no prospect of another train that night, the refreshment room closed, and all the seats on the platform freshly painted that morning. The last simile is due to my having sat down on the egg of a mutton-bird when we reached the head of the lava cascade.

"We shall never get our luggage up here," I said. "Which means that we shall have to live down at the bottom in the provision depôt. By Jove, if I ever get back to England, I'll write a stinging letter to *The Times* about the way these depôts are kept up. And incidentally what *are* we going to eat?"

"I don't think we shall have any difficulty in finding plenty to eat," Biscoe said. "The really important thing to know is whether we shall find enough water. Volcanic soil is very porous, and the tuff of which this island is chiefly composed, to judge by the face of the cliffs, is not at all favorable to our chance of coming across any springs."

"That sounds jolly. Well, you'd better go and prospect, my dear fellow. Rose and I will stay here. The island doesn't look much more than a mile or two across. You ought to be able to walk right round it in an hour and a half. If you meet any goats, let me know, and I'll try to shoot you one for dinner."

Biscoe did not seem to like the notion of leaving Rose and me together, or perhaps it would be fairer to say of going off by himself. However, I pointed out to him that he was so much more capable than I was of forming an estimate of the natural resources of the island that he was obviously the one to undertake the first exploration.

"But why don't you come with me?" he asked.

"Well, we don't want to drag Rose all over the place and tire her unnecessarily before we know what labors are before us, and I hardly think she'd like to be left alone. Would you, Rose?"

"I don't mind, sir."

After this there seemed no valid excuse for not accompanying Biscoe, and so we both set out, leaving Rose by the head of the lava cascade. I offered her a pistol, but she declared that she should feel less frightened without a weapon. She was evidently still the slave of the old feminine superstition that firearms go off abruptly of their own accord, a superstition that I suppose was started by some early Bluebeard who wanted to keep his wife from poking her nose into his new harquebus.

Biscoe and I found that Goat Island on a closer acquaintance had few surprises to offer us in the way of hidden landscapes. We calculated that it was almost a perfect circle with a diameter of a mile and a half. The land sloped up to a rounded hill on the west and came to an end in a magnificent cliff that ran sheer to the sea with a drop of nearly a thousand feet. Biscoe considered that this hill was what was left of an extinct volcano.

"You're quite sure that it is extinct?" I asked.

"Centuries ago," he said confidently. "If you take a look over the edge of the cliff, you'll see that this was part of the neck of the old volcano. It's all solid lava. The cliffs round the rest of the island which seem to fall away gradually to not much more than two hundred feet at the eastern extremity show perfectly the various beds that flowed from the volcano and built up the island. The lowest stratum is andesitic lava. Then you get a deep bed of light-colored pumiceous tuff mixed with great blocks of pumice and obsidian and fragments of andesite. I

should say that was the last effort of the old volcano. Later on—but of course even the approximate date is quite impossible to calculate—I should say that the volcano changed its locus of activity and broke out here."

"Here?" I echoed, taking a quick step back.

"Yes, you can distinctly see the outlines of a very much smaller crater on this slope. I should surmise that from this was ejected a number of flows of andesitic lava, which would have spread out in different directions as they rolled down the slope of the older mountain. You probably noticed the lava in those gullies we crossed. The stream that flowed farthest went over the pumiceous cliff and formed the cascade up which we climbed from the beach. Lucky it did, too, or otherwise, as far as I can see, the top of the island would have been inaccessible. After that there was an ejection of blackish vesicular scoria." He stooped over, picked up a handful of soil, and looked at it through a pocket glass. "Yes, basaltic," he murmured. "The olivine crystals show that. After the scoria came an eruption of mud and fine ash, and that formed the soil of the island, which looks moderately fertile."

I yawned.

"Well, that's all very instructive, Biscoe. But we can't eat olivine crystals, however delicious they sound. Do you see any sign of those goats?"

Biscoe shook his head.

"I expect we shall have to subsist on shell-fish and young mutton-birds," he proclaimed.

"Do you think that this is the laying season for turtles?" I asked. "Because in all the books I've ever read about desert islands turtles invariably arrive at the right moment and provide the shipwrecked party with fresh eggs."

Biscoe said that he did not know when turtles laid,

but that in any case he scarcely thought that the small beach on which we had landed was a suitable spot.

"Ernest would have known when turtles laid."

"Ernest who?"

"Ernest Robinson of the well-known Swiss family."

"Ah, yes!" Biscoe laughed. "That absurd old book!"

"Absurd?" I exclaimed. "My dear fellow, considering that our immediate future is going to be built on the foundations laid by that immortal work, I think you ought to be more careful about the way you talk of it. I'm disappointed in you, Biscoe. I think you ought to have known about the habits of turtles. And look here, I do not want to impugn your geological knowledge, but over those turtles you've shaken my confidence in your omniscience; are you perfectly sure that this volcano isn't going to produce a third crater? I don't want another lecture about what it threw up before. I simply want to know if it's likely to throw up anything at all, because, whether it's mud or blocks of obsidian, we shall find ourselves in a very uncomfortable predicament if it gets lively."

"Good gracious, no," he laughed. "This volcano has probably been extinct for thousands of years."

"Yes, but remember what happened to the elder Pliny. He probably walked about the slopes of Vesuvius and lectured his friends on andesitic lava just as you're doing. And I daresay some nervous middle-aged Pompeian asked him the very question I've just asked you."

"Yes, but we know more about volcanic action nowadays," said Biscoe. "Of course, one can never be absolutely positive about anything."

"No, that has always seemed to me the great disadvantage of a scientific education," I said. "Now, if you'd taken up theology instead of geology, you could have been perfectly positive."

"But on the indications I think I can guarantee that we shall not be disturbed. You see, the formation of——"

"All right, all right," I interrupted. "I accept your bare word. Come along, let's leave this old volcano and finish our tour of the island. Rose will be wanting to make us some tea, and we haven't found any water yet."

"Why, I've seen any amount of water," he said.

"Where?"

"In every gully we crossed."

"Do you mean those filthy puddles in the hollows of the rocks?"

"I reckon that's all the water we shall find. I told you not to expect springs in this porous volcanic formation."

And I'm sorry to say that Ernest was right.

"Do you mean to tell me that we shall have to carry water from those puddles all the way down to the beach? What are we going to carry it in? I have those bailing-pots I got from the Indians, but they leak."

"We shall have to rig up something."

"I know! I've got an exceptionally large sponge-bag."

I was pleased with myself for thinking of this. I was delighted with the first parturition of necessity.

We completed our circuit of the island without seeing the vestige of a goat; but when we joined Rose again she declared that she had seen a large white animal looking at her from behind a bush in the nearest hollow about fifty yards away from the cascade. We were shown the very bush, but there was no sign of a goat or any other beast, and we insisted that what Rose saw must have been some very large sea-bird.

It was decided to return to the beach and make

that our headquarters. We scrambled down the cascade, and I was thankful, when we reached the bottom, to perceive how cool and shady it was down below. If the only beach the island possessed had faced north or west we could scarcely have borne the heat.

When I saw our luggage heaped up where it had been put ashore by the lascars, the sensation of having alighted at a desolate railway station recurred. Biscoe had gone back to his theory of a joke's having been played upon us, for he said:

"I can't help feeling that we shall see the yacht before dark."

But we did not see the yacht that night, nor the next morning, nor ever again.

I do not know what we should have done on Goat Island without Rose. I made up my mind that, if I ever saw Miss Titchener again, I should strongly advise her to recommend Rose to Mrs. Bonney as cook instead of Winifred, who would no doubt by that time be married to Dick Duffy and not resent it. A limpet about five inches across was our standing dish. What that beastly mollusc would have been like without Rose to work on it I dread to think: it was nasty enough, with all the tender care she lavished upon its preparation. Still, it was just edible, and I begin to think that there must have been several neolithic Roses, because otherwise it is incredible to me that man should have continued to make limpets his main article of diet for apparently several thousand years, if not longer. I have examined prehistoric shell-mounds on another island, the abode of a writing friend of mine who has given me a great deal of help with this narrative, and in one field we dug through twelve solid feet of limpet shells. Millions of limpets must have been eaten to form an accumulation like that. After my experience on Goat Island I simply cannot under-

stand it. Unfortunately the young mutton-birds on which Biscoe had boasted we should live were still too young to be nutritious. We used to dig these round balls of grayish-blue fluff out of their burrows; but we hated to kill them, and in order to get anything like a meal we had to kill two dozen at least. Biscoe was most anxious for us to try eating rats. He pointed out that they had already assimilated the limpets, so that therefore they would be more digestible and could scarcely be nastier. But Rose declined to cook rats, and Biscoe, who never argued with her, abandoned his theory. I once threw a mouse into the stew when her head was turned and took care that it was served with Biscoe's portion.

"Hallo!" he exclaimed. "There's a mouse in my stew."

"Is there, Biscoe? Then you have an excellent opportunity to try what mice taste like."

But he lacked that blind passion for knowledge which makes the martyr to science, and he declined to nibble even the hindlegs. Considering that he had vaingloriously proposed to eat rats, I thought his conduct feeble in the extreme. We ate a few of the parrakeets, which I used to catch by clapping my hat over them when they were feeding; but they were tough and savorless, and we preferred them as ornaments of the landscape. We got some crabs occasionally; but when I remember what delicious meals all the people I read of used to have on desert islands, I maintain that we were treated unfairly by fortune. We had neither fruit nor vegetables, and of course no bread. In the best tales of desert islands people manage to get bread, usually because they happen to have some grains of wheat in their pockets when they are wrecked. Now I never met anybody in real life who made a habit of carrying grains of wheat about with him. When people are run over in Lon-

don and their pockets are searched for some clew to their identity, you never hear that grains of wheat were found in the injured man's waistcoat pocket. So, I do not feel that we can be blamed for not remembering to bring any grains of wheat with us. But how I longed for bread! Ben Gunn longed for cheese, and Dr. Livesey produced some from his snuff-box, which I have always felt was stretching it a bit, because I do not believe that even in the eighteenth century people carried cheese about with them in snuff-boxes. Anyway, I should have hated cheese without bread, and how on that island I longed for bread! But why does a man long for bread? Nobody ever eats bread for pleasure. There is nothing in bread as bread that offers the least attraction. It is really used as a kind of anæsthetic for all other food. But how I longed for it on Goat Island! I remember vaguely a tale in Herodotus about a Phrygian king who wanted to find out the original language spoken by mankind and who had a pair of children segregated from all human intercourse when they were still too young to say a word. I am not sure that he did not have them put on a desert island. When they were old enough to talk, they were examined, and the first word they uttered was the Phrygian for bread. I never believed that story until I was marooned on Goat Island, but now I believe it.

What I longed for most after bread was fruit. There was one small bush with berries, which Biscoe said he thought were eaten by Maoris after being soaked in seawater to extract their poison. But I decided not to risk it, especially as the bush smelt abominably. I wish I could remember the Latin name of the plant, but I have mislaid or lost the note I made about it at the time. I began to worry about our getting scurvy if we never had any greenstuff, and I persuaded Rose to cook a dish of grass occa-

sionally. I found it tolerably good, certainly much better than French beans as they are usually cooked in England, and I made a point of eating a small amount every two or three days.

If, notwithstanding Rose's ingenuity, we ate poorly, we did not lack the minor comforts of the dressing-room, for having equipped ourselves for life on a tropical island we had a much larger assortment of useful articles than the average traveler carries with him. In addition to these, Biscoe with much foresight and a great deal of determination, for which I give him the fullest credit, had provided us with various cooking utensils he had stolen from the galley of the *Octoroon*. From these he had unfortunately omitted to secure either a kettle or a pail, so that the fetching of water from the pools on the top of the island in hats and sponge-bags took up much of our time and energy. Biscoe had also brought with him a tarpon-rod, with which for several days we had some good catches. Then one evening he caught an enormous kingfish, which pulled both him and me into the water from the rock where we were angling and carried off the rod.

We gave up the hut to Rose, because we both had portable sleeping equipments and could get along perfectly well on the beach. There was plenty to occupy us, what with fetching water and fuel, searching for crabs and limpets, making raids on the burrows of the mutton-birds, and walking twice a day round the island in the morning and in the evening to see if we could sight a ship in the offing. Our life, apart from the monotony of the food, was pleasant enough; and even if we had not had plenty of books, we should scarcely have had time to find it dull, so many household needs had to be attended to. Of course we had no lamps or candles, which was rather a bore, and during the first three weeks the moon was not much

use. However, the amount of exercise we had to take during the day made us drowsy, and we soon got into the habit of getting early off to sleep.

Our attitude to Rose is hard to describe. I think the nearest I can get to it is to say that we were on the kind of terms with her that the boys of a family are on with the kitchen. We were familiar, but she would always be relapsing abruptly into the maid and reminding us by her manner of the distance between us. She would never eat with us, which I thought rather absurd, until Biscoe pointed out that among savages it is rare to find the women eating with the men. He maintained that it was a fundamental feminine instinct which would remain long after we had forgotten the distinction of class.

"You talk as if we were going to spend the rest of our lives on this island," I said.

"I don't suppose it will come to that," he replied. "But unless the *Octoroon* comes to fetch us off, I see no reason why we should not spend a very long time here—a very long time indeed. This group is right out of the track of ships between Auckland and Rarotonga or between Auckland and Suva. The old South-seamen are rare birds nowadays; and unless a party of naturalists pays us a special visit, or a Government ship arrives to replenish the provision depôt, I really don't see why a ship should ever come here. I should doubt if anybody landed on this island once in ten years."

"You seem to view the prospect with remarkable equanimity."

"I don't think I should mind very much," he said. "Though I wish we'd struck a place with a better flora. Up to date I've only managed to list thirty-three phanerogams, which is pretty poor. Still, things might have been much worse. I'm going to unpack my microscope to-morrow and do some work on the

rock crystals. And another thing I thought we might do was to try to rig up a fish-trap of some kind out of one of our trunks."

The moon had come round again to full, and one night we all of us went for an enchanting walk across the island. We sat for a long time on the grassy slope of what we called Crater Hill and watched the island swimming before us in the moony radiance. I fancied that I could see a sail far off, and we gathered together a pile of dead scrub to make a bonfire. The sail turned out to be an illusion, but we could not resist the pleasure of lighting the bonfire, which leapt up hot and red into the air and made the world outside the circle of its power appear magically dim and unreal like the milky forms that visionaries claim to behold in the heart of a beryl. I was tempted to express the beauty of the night by holding Rose's hand, but I was afraid that she would think I was trying to take advantage of the situation, and I resisted the impulse. I must confess that I felt aware of being rather chivalrous, which takes the bloom off my behavior.

We did not go to bed that night until after eleven, which by now was an hour of fantastic lateness for us, and if I am to express how late we thought it, I shall have to return as I always do to childhood to find any comparison for the sentiments of awe with which I looked at the angle of the hour-hand on my watch. Soon after midnight, Biscoe and I were wakened by a terrified scream from the hut; and when we rushed along the beach to find out what was the matter, we met Rose running toward us in her nightgown, her hair tumbled about her shoulders, seeming in the bright moonlight an emblem of poetic madness. When we asked her what had happened, she collapsed upon the sand and fell into a convulsion of sobs. She was so hysterical that, much to

Biscoe's indignation, I proposed to restore her to her senses by splashing her with sea-water.

She gradually became coherent and managed to explain to us that she had had been wakened by a feeling that there was something in the hut.

"I sat up in bed, and oh, sir," she gasped, clutching Biscoe's hand to give herself strength to relate the dreadful tale, "oh, sir, I saw an enormous goat coming towards me. I gave a shriek, and it stood up on its hindlegs and ran away. Oh, sir, I can't never go in that hut again. Oh, I wish I hadn't of left England! They all said I was a stupid ever to do such a thing, and Oh dear! Oh dear! Oh dear!"

She buried her face in Biscoe's shoulder and sobbed louder than ever.

"I knew something like this would happen if we went on eating limpets," I said.

"It wasn't the limpets," Rose sobbed. "It wasn't a nightmare. It wasn't! it wasn't! It was real!"

"No, no, my dear girl," I insisted. "It was moonlight on top of limpets."

"Why argue with her when she is in this state?" Biscoe asked angrily. "Surely you can see that the poor girl has had a nasty fright?"

"Yes, but quite clearly she didn't see a goat get up on its hindlegs, and it's only fair to convince her that she is suffering from the effects of a nightmare."

"Perhaps it really was a goat," said Biscoe; whereupon Rose began to scream again.

"Nonsense!" I said crossly, for I thought that Biscoe was encouraging Rose to be silly. "A goat couldn't have kept itself hidden on this island for nearly a month, and it certainly couldn't have climbed down the cascade, exceptionally active an animal though it seems to have been, according to Rose's account."

"But, don't you remember, she thought she saw a goat the very first day?"

"Yes, but we decided that it must have been some large sea-bird, and by Jove, perhaps what she saw to-night was a bird. We've talked a lot about goats, don't forget, and some old tropic-bird or albatross may have poked his beak into the hut and been just as much frightened by Rose as Rose was frightened by him. Personally, however, I don't believe that there's any need to find anything with flesh and blood to account for her fright. I still maintain that it was the effect of limpets and moonlight. We had what for us was a very exciting evening with that sail I imagined when I was wide awake, and then a bonfire afterwards, and sitting up till eleven. Now go back to bed, Rose, like a sensible girl," I advised her. "And try to get off to sleep."

"Oh, I couldn't, sir! I wouldn't sleep alone in that hut, not for nothing!" she declared.

"I'll go and sit with her till she drops off," said Biscoe, and I felt a sharp and unworthy resentment against him for thinking that the mere assumption of a medical tone of voice gave him a better right than me to look after the girl. However, it was obvious that I could not with any dignity offer to halve the job of looking after Rose, and I left them together. Lying on my back and gazing up at the stars, I tried to convince myself of humanity's paltriness. I wished to be ascetic and dispassionate, to survey existence through the smoked glasses of philosophy rather than through the rose-colored spectacles of idle romance. I said that Marcus Aurelius was the man to admire; and I could not understand why Biscoe, who had lived so many years in the desiccated air of hot-water-pipes, should be inclined to make a fool of himself over a girl's complexion. He should have been sterner with Rose; it was not fair to spoil

her by appearing to take too keen an interest in her welfare. He should be considerate, but not attentive; kind but not affectionate; friendly but never intimate. I did not believe that Rose was the kind of a girl who would deliberately invent a nightmare just for the gratification of proving that if she chose she could make a man her slave; but nevertheless I felt that Biscoe was lucky to have a cool and practical man of the world like myself to keep him from making too big a fool of himself. I wondered what they were talking about in the hut; and I was so nervous and unsettled after being wakened suddenly by that scream that I did not get to sleep again till the gray smoke of dawn was rising in the east.

CHAPTER XVII

THE FLAGSTAFF

IN the morning the excitement of Rose's mental adventure, as I insisted that it should be called, was forgotten in the fresh excitement of seeing a log washed up on our beach. Excitement may sound exaggerated; but after nearly a month on a small desert island the arrival of a log stamped with the name of the timber-merchants in Auckland to whom it belonged was like a telegram in a country village fifty years ago. Biscoe, who really was very well informed, even though he did not know the season when turtles lay, said that it was a kauri log and that it must have floated out to sea from one of the New Zealand rivers, down which it would have been dispatched after being felled.

"That shows which way the current sets, and I'm not surprised that what plants I have found on this island are typical of the New Zealand flora and do not show a trace of the characteristic Polynesian flora."

"We ought to do something to celebrate the arrival of this log," I suggested. "How far has it rolled?"

"I suppose about seven hundred miles."

"Why shouldn't we make a flagstaff out of it?" I suggested. "We'll stick it up on the top of Crater Hill and nail one of your coats to it. That will attract the attention of the least observant ship."

Biscoe liked the idea of using it as a flagstaff; but he would not allow one of his coats to be used, and in the end I had to sacrifice a shirt, one of those

shirts which one buys from a square inch pattern and hides away for years. We felt how real and earnest life was when we were dragging that log up the cascade and right across the island to the top of Crater Hill. It gave us a sense of plastic stress, of *sturm und drang,* and of a divinity shaping our rough-hewn ends. With a great deal of difficulty we dug a hole with a trowel and planted it firmly on the summit, after which we sat down under a spreading chestnut tree of Tupperisms and said, while we proudly watched my shirt fluttering in the breeze, that at any rate we should have earned our dinner to-day. I suppose that it was the sense of moral well-being induced by strenuous exertion that led me to caution Biscoe about Rose.

"I think in fairness to the girl, you ought to be careful," I told him. "You probably don't realize that Rose might put quite a wrong construction on what to you is nothing but the expression of your kindly concern over the poor girl's fright. The best of women, Biscoe, are always women first and good next."

"May I inquire what you are trying to hint at?" he asked, fixing me with his glasses in an expression of pedagogic disapproval.

"I'm not hinting at anything," I disclaimed. "On the contrary, I intend to say what I have to say with the utmost frankness. You and I are not in the least likely to behave as Abel Hearne and Harry Hawkyard behaved in 1874. To begin with, the volcano on Goat Island has been extinct too long, and we have probably been better brought up. We have had the advantage of learning self-restraint by playing cricket and football. At the same time, we are two men with a girl, and I think in justice to her that we ought always to bear that fact in mind. To be almost brutally frank, my dear Biscoe, I think you made a

mistake last night in sitting up with Rose like that. Oh, yes, I know you had a perfectly legitimate reason for what you did—it sounds absurd for me to be talking like this—but it did introduce a kind of rivalry between you and me."

"I'm sorry to hear that," he said in a strange voice.

"I don't suppose for a moment, my dear fellow, that you were conscious of it, and I'm only too willing to blame myself entirely for the unworthy emotion. Still, the point is this: if you're going to lay yourself out to be agreeable by encouraging the girl to have nightmares, I'm not always going to bother about being sensible. Rose is a very pretty girl, and only last night when we were sitting up here round our bonfire I felt very much inclined to indulge in a little mildly flirtatious sentiment by holding her hand. I resisted the impulse, because I felt that the introduction to this island of what Nonconformist ministers and reviewers call sex and ordinary people love would be a profound mistake. We may have to live here together much longer than we expect. I intend to play my part and you ought to play yours, and I want us to be able to despise the old adage and say, 'Three's company, two's none!' "

"Yes, I should agree with you," Biscoe said, "if I intended to flirt with Rose. I should consider that an abominable thing to do in our circumstances. But last night I asked her to marry me, as soon as we can get a parson to perform the ceremony."

I looked at him in amazement.

"But, Biscoe, I must protest! Of course I respect the seriousness of your intentions; but is it fair to yourself or the girl to let the artificial conditions in which we are now living mark out the whole course of your future life?"

"Artificial conditions!" he exclaimed. "Natural conditions you mean."

"No, I mean artificial. By absolute standards they may be natural conditions; but for you and me they are relatively artificial. You can't imagine yourself proposing marriage to Rose a month ago when she was Mrs. Bonney's maid."

"Only because the artificial barriers of class would have made it impossible for me to get to know her. Fate has flung in my way an opportunity to comprehend the foolishness of the partitioned lives we lead. Some of the happiest marriages I have known were those between people in different stations."

"Yes," I added, "and also some of the most miserable."

"I should argue that the unhappy marriages of that kind are usually due to their having been forced on the man either by his own behavior previously or because the woman played her cards well enough to make marriage the price of possessing her. It's useless for you to attempt to dissuade me, Marsham. I have firmly made up my mind that my happiness in the future lies in marrying Rose. I have perfect liberty of choice, and I have chosen her. I am not encumbered with interfering relations. I am completely independent. I intend to lead the rest of my life away from museums. What better wife could a man find to share with him the kind of existence I hope to lead?"

"Yes, but before we get away from this island you may be sick of a natural mode of life," I observed. "Personally, if I have to eat many more limpets I shall begin to sigh for the complicated gastronomy that requires a hidebound existence in a crowded metropolis. I prefer that to the hidebound stomach I shall have to acquire if I stay here. Once or twice lately I've caught myself sighing for the hoot of a motor-horn and the india-rubber atmosphere of the Tube."

"I haven't," said Biscoe shortly.

"Your digestion may be made of sterner stuff; but an endless diet of limpets will wear down its resistance soon or late, and then you'll go back to civilization and appreciate that you've made a mistake."

"Well, I hope you'll remember our friendship, Marsham, and not try to upset Rose's confidence in the future. The knowledge that you understand and approve of the step we intend to take will make the dear little girl very happy."

We had reached the cascade. Supposing that Biscoe would want to tell Rose about his talk with me, I left him to go down to the beach alone while I took a walk across the interior of the island to meditate on the new situation. It was clear to me, even at this early stage, that Biscoe's behavior would make our compulsory imprisonment altogether much more irksome. Either I must practically withdraw from the company of the other two and pass an almost entirely solitary existence until the welcome ship hove in sight, or by trying to let the engagement (how ridiculous it seemed to talk of an engagement in our present position!) make no change in our relations run a double risk either of offending Biscoe by my indifference to Rose or of rousing his jealousy by being attentive to her. When people are thrown on top of one another as we had been thrown on this island, the most trifling incident may create an unbearable state of affairs. All sense of proportion would disappear in a world inhabited by three people who could never escape from one another. My having lightly revealed to Biscoe my temptation to take Rose's hand the night before was quite enough to kindle suspicion in his mind. He would watch every glance I gave her, which would annoy me, and in any light-hearted compliment I paid her to tease him a blood-feud might take its rise. Moreover, if we really were fated to remain on this island for months, it

might easily happen that I should fall in love with Rose myself. Out of mere boredom the moment would inevitably come when I should see no earthly reason why Biscoe should be having all the fun; the demon of competition would enter into my heart, and the survival of the fittest would have to be decided on Goat Island as everywhere else. I swept with an angry glance the ocean that surrounded us, and rebelled against the emptiness of it, at the self-satisfied way it winked at me in the sunshine, at its sleekness and sleepiness and light-blue loveliness. I never felt so sharply before the utter unlikelihood of any ship's ever coming to this island again, and I reminded myself of how we had sailed for weeks across that ocean without sighting another vessel. With these discouraging thoughts I flung myself down on the grass and read half a canto of the *Inferno,* after which I felt better, and made my way back to headquarters.

When I was scrambling down the cascade, I perceived that Biscoe and Rose were sitting enlaced on the beach, and I nearly cried out to them that the char-à-banc was waiting to go back. One of the results of their making love all the morning was that our limpets were not as well cooked as usual, and I hoped that Biscoe would notice this and reprove his future wife for her negligence. But he gazed at her all through the meal, his glasses in a glow of love and beaming with satisfaction at the nice little property he had acquired.

I think that Rose found the meal rather a strain; and just when she was beginning to recover a little of her ease, Biscoe asked her if she could not call him Godfrey. This was too much for me. Even if his name had been Tom or Dick or Albert, I should have felt that it ought not to be practiced at meals. But Godfrey! Godfrey! A name the only mitigating feature of which is that in the present state of religious

opinion it does not lend itself to an endearing abbreviation. I was not astonished that Rose tripped over the name and giggled. I looked at Biscoe to see how he liked her giggling, and it was only too obvious that the infatuated creature did.

"The eleventh of December," he proclaimed. "What a pity you cannot drink our health, Marsham."

Then I performed one of those little secret acts of self-abnegation, the total of which when the moral bankruptcy of humanity is investigated by the Great Receiver will surely add a larger sum to our assets than cynics are inclined to believe. I certainly added my mite that afternoon when I drained the last drop of brandy in my flask to the health and happiness of the couple. I left the lovers to themselves after this and spent the afternoon on my back under a stunted *myoporum* trying to count the transparent spots in its leaves, an occupation which shows better than any amount of analysis what I felt about life.

Biscoe and Rose were still sitting locked in each other's arms when I arrived with two sponge-bags of water for tea, of which by the way we still had a good stock, thanks to Mrs. Bonney and Miss Titchener, who had both packed several extra pounds for themselves in Rose's trunk. It was not very good tea, because we had to make it in a frying pan and drink it, Biscoe out of a soap-box, Rose out of a scent-bottle, and I out of one of those receptacles in my dressing-case which had traveled round with me for years without my having been able to discover until now what it was meant for. I must say it seems to me that the designers of dressing-cases rather let their foresight run away with them, because comparatively few of their clients can be cast away on desert islands, and why they should include fittings for such a rare emergency at the expense of space for useful things like dinner-jackets I cannot understand.

Biscoe asked me that night if I would mind Rose's having my sleeping-valise, because she was frightened to sleep in the hut alone, and he did not think that now they were engaged he ought to spend the night with her in the hut. This struck me as exaggerated sensibility; but since I perceived that he was anxious not to give occasion for gossip, I surrendered my valise and said that I would sleep in the hut myself.

I spent another restless night, haunted by half-conscious dreams of being on a desert island with only a girl like Rose as my companion. My brain kept pounding away with visions of red-fronted parrakeets, and rose-tailed tropic-birds, and Rose herself standing with blown hair on the green sward until I could only think in colors and at last fell asleep.

After breakfast Biscoe and I went to gather wood and collect water as usual. I offered to go alone; but perhaps he thought that I had felt a little out of it yesterday and he insisted on doing his share.

"We mustn't drift apart just because I'm engaged to be married," he said to me so earnestly that I had no heart to be ungracious. "And we'll not give up our regular walks twice a day round the island, either," he added.

When we were half-way round and climbing up Crater Hill, he stopped suddenly and exclaimed:

"Good Heavens! It's gone!"

"Gone? What's gone?"

"Our flagstaff!"

After we had set it up, I had forgotten all about the flagstaff in the shock of the announcement Biscoe had made later on.

"It must have blown down," I said.

"But it hasn't! We should see it lying on the grass if it had."

We hurried to search the spot where we had so laboriously planted the kauri log yesterday morning.

There was the hole in the ground; but the log itself was nowhere to be seen.

"It *must* have blown down," I repeated. "It must have fallen over the cliff."

"If it had blown down," Biscoe said, "the ground would be torn up all round it. And, anyway, it wasn't near enough to the edge of the cliff to blow over."

We stood staring at one another, and I think that both our hearts were going like drums.

"Do you suppose that Rose really did see something after all?" Biscoe asked.

"Of course not," I said. "Robinson Crusoe saw an old billy goat in a cave and thought it was the Devil, but don't tell me that Rose saw the Devil and thought it was a goat. Depend upon it, there's a natural explanation of this mystery. Suppose your old volcano isn't extinct? Could some kind of a shock have taken place and pitched the flagstaff into the sea?"

Biscoe shook his head.

"Absolutely inconceivable," he declared.

"Yes, but not less inconceivable than that a heavy log should remove itself from the ground and walk off of its own accord. Earthquakes do occur, and I should imagine that a volcanic island like this is peculiarly subject to them."

"There's nothing seismic about this business. A shock that was powerful enough to blow that log far enough up in the air to fall into the sea would have brought half the cliff rattling about our heads."

"Well, if it isn't wind and if it isn't an earthquake, what is it?" I asked. "Even if Rose were right, and there is some kind of a queer goat on the island, I don't see how a goat could get rid of a twenty-foot log unless it ate it."

"It's the first real mystery I've ever come up against," Biscoe declared. "I'm absolutely at a loss. Wait a minute! Here are the marks where it was

dragged over the turf. You and I carried the log; we didn't drag it. Yes, quite plainly you can follow them down the hill. Marsham, there must be somebody else on this island! And, by gad, we shall find him if we follow up these marks. Look, they're quite plain!"

But suddenly the trail stopped.

"He evidently got tired of dragging the log," Biscoe suggested. "He must have carried it from this point."

"I hope he enjoyed the weight of it," I said. "But what is the good of attributing personality to whatever removed our flagstaff? There isn't anywhere for a human being to hide on Goat Island, and I decline to believe that a *poltergeist* would waste his energies on a desert island."

"Still, it is extraordinary, coming on top of Rose's experience the night before last. She still swears that she wasn't dreaming, but that she actually did see this horrible animal."

"But, even supposing she actually did see a large goat," I argued. "That won't explain the disappearance of the flagstaff."

On our way back to the beach we racked our minds for an explanation of the mystery; but we could think of no remotely probable hypothesis.

"Don't say anything about this to Rose," Biscoe begged me. "It'll only make her more nervous than ever."

But poor Biscoe need not have made that request, for when we reached the bottom of the cascade, there was no sign of Rose anywhere to be seen—and when we called her, there was no answer.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE OTHER BEACH

WE all of us have our own ways of displaying our hysteria in moments of crisis. Some weep, some laugh, some curse. My own weakness is to imagine some tragic absurdity and to have the greatest difficulty in preventing myself from joking about it. So now I was wondering if Rose had drowned herself rather than address Biscoe as Godfrey, and my inside shook with repressed nervous laughter at the idea, which I knew I must not enunciate. Biscoe's fright took the form of supposing that if he did not have to wear glasses he should be able to discover immediately where she was.

"Anyway," I said, "we mustn't waste time in wondering what can have happened to her. We've got to find out where she is. We've got to search the island yard by yard until we do find her."

"Unless a boat has landed and she has been carried off," Biscoe groaned. "O, god, if I weren't so short-sighted!"

"It seems to me absolutely certain," I theorized, "that whatever carried off our flagstaff carried off Rose, and I'm beginning to believe now that the poor girl really did see something strange the night before last. But don't let's waste any more time in arguing what it was. Let's find out where she is now."

I do not think that by the time dusk fell there was a bush or a rock on that island we had not examined, yet without finding anywhere a trace of Rose or the least clue to the unseen presence on the island to whom

we attributed her disappearance. We lay flat on our bellies every fifty yards and peered over the edge of the cliffs, whence except for a stretch of perhaps a hundred yards beyond the southerly headland of our beach we could look down to where the ocean lapped the face of the cliffs or broke upon empty and inaccessible beaches far below.

"She must have been carried off from the sea side," I declared when, exhausted by the search and our voices hoarse with shouting, we sat down in the moonlight to eat raw limpets. "And whatever carried her off must have had tremendous strength," I went on, "for there was no sign of a struggle near the hut."

"My happiness was too great to last," Biscoe groaned; and then for a couple of hours he sat in mute despair, his head buried in his hands.

I tried to be optimistic about the morrow; but it was difficult to persuade him that there was any possible place of concealment that we had not thoroughly ransacked to-day.

"Still, she must be somewhere on the island," I said. "And if she's on the island we must find her sooner or later. If we only had a boat so that we could systematically explore some of those beaches at the foot of the cliffs."

"What's the good of discussing 'ifs'?" he asked moodily.

"Not much," I admitted. "But practical results often follow unpractical discussions."

We were so much worn out by our daylong exertions that in spite of our grief and anxiety we slept soundly and by sunrise were up and searching for Rose with renewed hope and vigor. I begged Biscoe not to waste his energy in wandering about the middle of the island, but to devote all his attention to the cliffs, where I was convinced that, if anywhere, we should find a clew that would help us discover the

lair of this mysterious creature which had invaded our solitude like the terror that creeps into a dream.

We made another circuit of the cliffs with the same result as the day before.

"Yes," I said, "all round the island there is only that one stretch where the base of the cliff is invisible. But that particular stretch of water or beach is less accessible from above than any, because, as I am lying now, I reckon that the top of the cliff must be jutting quite forty feet beyond the base."

I jumped up and told Biscoe I was positive that, if Rose was anywhere on the island, we should find her at the bottom of this stretch.

"And how are we to get to the bottom?"

"If we had a rope," I began.

"'If' again! But we have not got a rope," Biscoe snapped.

I hesitated. I wanted to volunteer to do something; but I wanted also to be sure that, when it came to the point, I should have the courage to do it.

"Look here, Biscoe," I said at last. "We'll go back down the cascade and I'll . . . ." I hesitated once more. "Yes, look here," I went on hurriedly, "I'll try to swim round to the next beach. I don't mind admitting that I funk it most tremendously, because ever since I saw a picture in early youth of Tom Thumb being swallowed by a huge red-mouthed fish I have had a horror of sharks. Look here, you know more about these waters than I do. Are there likely to be sharks round here?"

"Sure to be," he said. "Any amount of them."

I believe that if he had denied the possibility of sharks I should never have gone. But his honesty in the presence of what must have been a great temptation to him in his grief decided me not to back out.

"If only I could swim more than ten yards," he bemoaned.

" 'If' again!" I laughed.

"I apologize for my remarks, Marsham. You've made me feel horribly ashamed of myself. I humbly apologize."

We turned back and climbed down the cascade in silence, I, because my heart was in my mouth, and Biscoe, because his was too full, I suppose. When we reached the hut, I unpacked a black silk bathing suit, stripped, and put it on, wondering all the while what the sensation of being bitten in half would be like. I imagined that one would faint with fright and feel no pain.

"It's not much more than seventy-five yards round that point, and I should reckon it would take another seventy-five yards to land on the other side. Look here, Biscoe, in case I have trouble with the Questing Beast I think it would be as well to take a revolver."

But neither of us could invent a way to carry the weapon without its getting wet or being too much in the way.

"And it wouldn't be any help against sharks. I'm much more afraid of them than I am of the Unknown Presence," I said with a wry laugh.

Without waiting to frighten myself any more, I ran down the beach and plunged into the sea. I am a good swimmer, and my muscles had recovered from the flabbiness of shipboard existence by carrying wood and water up and down the cascade three or four times a day for nearly a month. But until that morning I never knew how fast I could swim, nor realized the luxury that land can be, until I waded ashore again on the other side of the headland and gloated on the velvet of the warm sand beneath my feet.

I knew at once that I was on the right trail, because the first thing I saw was a big raft of kauri logs, on top of which our flagstaff was laid with my shirt still tied to it.

"Rose!" I shouted at the top of my voice. "Rose, where are you? Rose! Rose!"

The name rang back from the beetling cliffs, and I wondered if Biscoe could hear my voice and wished that I was visible from the summit. I walked up the beach to examine the raft and became aware suddenly that I was treading on bones. I nearly turned and plunged back into the sea, for even the prospect of sharks was less terrifying than the silence of this long beach with its gray bones and stones and sunless cliffs and that empty raft waiting there for something; but I braced my nerves and prepared to examine the face of the cliffs for the lair of the Caliban who was lord of this desert strand. I soon discovered a low cave at the base of the headland that separated this beach from the one where we had been living; but I confess that the notion of creeping into it on all fours without being able to picture what kind of creature I was going to meet face to face in the darkness dismayed my courage. However, if Rose's fate was to be known, I must make the effort, though I wished I were not in a bathing suit and therefore lacking the moral support of trousers. While I was standing before the entrance and urging my will to assert itself, I heard inside a noise of bleating, and presently the head of a goat of most unnatural size emerged from the low aperture. It bleated at me several times, and then in a hesitating voice that recalled poor Stephen Ringshaw's attempts at speech it said:

"Who are you, mate?"

I daresay that this will look comic in print, but I did not so much as smile when it happened.

"Who are you, mate?" it repeated, and coming out into the open it stood up and let me see that I was being addressed by a tall and bearded old man with shaggy hair and so much of his face as was visible as green as the copper sheathing of a ship's bottom.

"You want to steal my Rose?" he said.

He stamped his feet as a ram or a goat stamps in anger, lowered his head, and came for me in a rush before I could say a word in explanation of my presence.

I went low instinctively and brought him down with a crash among the bones; but he recovered himself more quickly than I did and was on top of me before I could rise. His hands were on my throat. I should have been strangled if I had not managed to seize his beard and jerk his head down until he bellowed with the pain and relaxed his grip.

"I'm not Abel Hearne!" I shouted on a sudden inspiration.

He jumped back from my prostrate body, rose to his feet, and with head thrown right back bleated until the cliffs rang with the horrid sound. I got up slowly, with a rueful glance at my legs, which had been badly cut by the bones and were dripping with blood.

The old man stopped bleating and eyed me. When he was standing upright, the goat's mask he wore became a helmet and gave him the look of a horned viking.

"No, you're not Abel," he said at last.

"But I know where Abel is," I told him.

The old man seized my wrist.

"He's not here?" he asked feverishly.

"No, Abel Hearne is on Macqueen Island," I said.

The old man shook his fist at the sky and blasphemed. From that moment he never hesitated in his speech again.

"I knew it! I knew it! I knew it all these years!" he cried. "But we had our bargain. Rose for him. The gold for me."

"The gold!" I echoed in excitement, for at last I saw light.

"And now he's come back to steal the gold. I gave

him my Rose for the gold, and now he's come back after years and years to take my gold. But he shan't never have it. No, by the — — ! he shan't never have it," he blasphemed. Then he turned to me with a whine. "I'm not a goat, mate. Don't you go for to think I'm a goat, mate, because I've lived with goats and the bones of goats all them years. Harry Hawkyard ain't no goat. But, see here, mate, and listen to me. I can't bide another day if Abel Hearne is on Macqueen. He found the gold afore. Maybe he'll find it again. And you must help me, mate. Don't go and turn agin an old man because he were a bit quick in the uptake. All these years I been slaving to build my raft, and now she's built I can't lanch her. You help me lanch her, mate, and I won't forget ye. You shall have a ounce of gold all for yourself." He put out a lean hand and patted my shoulder. "No, not all a ounce, because poor old Harry couldn't spare you all a ounce. No, but you shall have a pinch of gold all for yourself, if you'll help me lanch my raft."

I was interested to hear that he had made the same mistake as Robinson Crusoe and took off my hat once more to Daniel Defoe for always knowing what was likely to happen in exceptional circumstances. I knew that the old man was ours now that the master passion of his life was threatened unless we helped him, so I was properly stern.

"I'll not put out a hand to launch your raft, Hawkyard, till you bring back the girl you carried off. What right had you to come sneaking down to our beach and carry off that poor girl?"

"The girl's here, mate," he whined. "There's no harm come to her. Don't turn agin poor old Harry. I heerd 'Rose' here and 'Rose' there, and there come over me the thought of the nights and the days when I had a Rose of my own. But I give her up, mate, and I was blue hell's fool to do it, for I had the only

knife, mate, and I could have put Abel quiet as easy as whisper—, aye, and kep' the girl and the gold for myself. Many's the time I've laid awake here and fancied I was a-holding her in my arms as I used to do. And then I'd get to thinking about my gold, and what with the girl and the gold and the bloody bleating of the goats I was near going off my tibby. There's queer fancies come to anyone alone on a island, mate. There's been times when I've run for hours in sunshine and in moonshine arter my own shadder. Aye, mate, for hours I've run, and that ain't natural when anyone gets so as they want to bash their own shadder what never done them no harm, only keep jigging jest out of reach like a little dawg as is froughtened to come when his master whistles to him."

I am afraid that I had been forgetting about the feelings of poor Rose, so loath had I been to interrupt the old man's talk. Now, I remembered my duty and sharply ordered him to produce her.

"Don't you go fretting about her, mate. If she's been a-sighing and a-sobbing in poor old Harry's cave, why so has poor old Harry hisself, mate. For years, as you might say. But if you'll help me lanch the raft, we'll fix that bastard Abel yet. I suppose he'll be getting an old man now. He were a red-faced man in his day, Abel were. But Rose she were all for me. And when I told her as she could go with Abel, she spoke up and cursed me, Rose did. 'I bin your wife in the sight of God, Harry Hawkyard, for nigh on two years,' she up and said. 'And you sold me the same as you might sell a horelot,' she said. 'And me five months gone,' she said. 'And you to tell me I'm another man's!' 'I'm sick and tired of you,' I said. And then she up and cursed me, Rose did. 'May the gold swaller and burn you up,' she said, 'and may you live to want me and me not there, and may you die like a dead rat in a gutter,' she said, 'and may blue hell have

your soul!' 'That's enough of argyfying,' I said. And I turned and left her and never see'd her again."

With this he went down abruptly on all fours and led the way into the cave for me to follow him.

After about thirty yards of most uncomfortable progress the roof became higher, and presently the aperture widened into a cavern of a considerable size, to judge by the echoing of our voices, for it was pitch dark and I had only sound to guide my estimate.

"Rose!" I called loudly. "Are you there?"

On this old Hawkyard lit a candle, and I was able to see Rose sitting on a heap of goat-skins and looking scared out of her wits. It was some time before she could manage to grasp that she was rescued. I found the task of consoling her rather pleasant and I was touched by chagrin when she said:

"Isn't Mr. Biscoe with you?"

I told her that he was searching for her on the other side of the island, whereupon she burst into tears, so that I felt bound to sit beside her once more and try to make her realize that her troubles were over. But she had not a word of thanks for me and would keep on asking for Biscoe.

I soon discovered, when I looked round the cave, what had become of the stores in the provision depôt for shipwrecked mariners; but I could not imagine how that old man had contrived to get the stuff here, nor incidentally how he had managed to drag Rose, strong though he was.

"Did you swim round with her?" I asked.

"Swim? No! No need to swim. You follow me, mate; and you, missy, too. I'll show you. I'll show you."

He led the way down another winding adit, at the end of which we soon perceived a crack of light. Pushing aside a large piece of broken lava, we emerged upon our own beach.

Biscoe was overjoyed to have Rose back; but I was amused to perceive that his rapture and relief were slightly alloyed by the way that the cave had broken some rule of geology.

"I don't understand it at all," he grumbled.

But Hawkyard was not going to stay quiet for a geological discussion. His one idea was to launch that raft and reach Macqueen. While Biscoe was consoling himself with Rose for the unconventional behavior of our island's formation, he beckoned me aside and implored me to return immediately to the other beach.

"If Abel's on Macqueen," he said, "Abel's too cunning for me to hang about here another minute. He found the gold afore, and he'll find it again. You swore you'd help me lanch the raft, mate. Don't leave an old man to rot in misery, mate. Don't let my bones lay with the bones of goats."

"Listen," I reminded him. "You promised me an ounce of gold if . . ."

"Not a ounce, mate," he said quickly. "A pinch of dust was what I said. And so I will. Don't you go for to think I'd try and best you, mate. You shall have your pinch, if you'll on'y help me get the raft afloat."

"If I help you launch the raft, I must come with you to Macqueen."

"Why not, mate? Why not? I'd be perishing glad for your company."

On this I went back with the old man to look at the raft. I saw at once that it would take a good deal of additional labor to make it seaworthy, and I told him that I did not think we should be able to get away at once. I pointed out that he would be much more likely to reach his goal if he had my help on the voyage, and he appeared to be reconciled to the notion of a little longer delay.

"There's one thing I'd be glad to know," I said,

"and that is how you ever got stranded on this island."

"That was where the curse begun to work, I reckon. I didn't set much store by curses afore that. But now I reckon, I do, as curses can do more nor anyone mought think. You must figure it out like this, mate. Abel and me sailed from the port of Sydney in the *Maid of Athens,* full-rigged ship, bound for London by the Horn with gold from the mines. We was to call at Auckland with emigrants, and we struck a rock off Macqueen Island in a hurricane, blown miles out of our course. All was for the boats, but only me and Abel and Rose come ashore alive. You wouldn't reckon to call this much of a island, mate, but believe you me when I say this is a bloody parrydise when you put it up agin Macqueen, which was half fire and sulphur and biling water and hot mud spitting up in your face. But Abel and me and Rose lived there all together in a manner of speaking. Only me I took her fancy, and Abel he didn't. So Abel, he took to wandering off by hisself, and that didn't aggravate me and Rose, because we was all for each other and didn't give blue hell for Abel. Abel and me nearly come to blows over it more nor once, and I was half in a mind to quiet him for good and all, me having the only knife. And I wish now I done it. But I didn't.

"Then after two years we sighted the *Southern Bride,* and Abel he said to me, 'Harry,' he said, 'you was always the man to think a powerful lot about money.' That was because he'd borrered half a quid off of me in Sydney afore we sailed, and when him and me was argyfying about Rose I'd remind him about that half quid and ask why he couldn't have paid it back like a man afore we struck. 'Why, Abel,' I said, 'since you mention it, I have thought a bit about money in my time, and which was why I could lend you half a quid and you never man enough to go for to pay me

back.' 'Supposing,' Abel said, 'I was to show you where there was thousands of pounds of gold hid away, gold enough, Harry,' he said, 'to make a king's mouth water with the sight of it,' he said. 'What would you say?' 'I'd say you was a liar,' I said. 'That's as may be,' he said very calm and collected. 'But what if I was to take and show it you?' he said. 'And what if I was to say, Harry, you can have the gold, you can; but if you has it, I has your girl?' 'Why, Abel,' said I, 'if you was to show me all that gold what would make a king's mouth water, you could have any girl you arst for, Rose or any other girl,' I said. So with that he ups and takes me over to where the mud was all biling and great spurruts of hot water bubbling up and the ground a-moaning and a-groaning and a-roaring like a lion in a cage. 'Here, Abel,' I said, 'if you're going to try and be funny, I've something here as 'll make you laugh arter me,' and with that I pulled out my knife. 'Stow that,' he said, 'and come along o' me,' and with that he started to walk over the biling mud till he come round the corner, and me after him with blisters on my feet the same as if I was being crucified. And when we come round the corner he showed me the *Maid of Athens* stove right into a cave the same as you might stuff a old rag in a leaky bucket. 'There she lays, Harry,' he said, 'and all the gold still aboard her; aye, and not a soul but me and you as knows it. Mostly,' he said, 'you can't get aboard her because of the undertow and the nasty way the combers strike here, but sometimes of a fine day like to-day you can get aboard as sweet as butter,' and with that he hops off of the rock and swims alongside and hauls hisself aboard by a rope.

"In a minute I see'd him go below and come up again with a yaller bar in his hand and which he was twisting about in his hands the same as anyone else

might twist a bar of iron. 'Bar gold,' he shouts. And then he goes down again and brings up a bag and starts trickling of it over the side the same as anybody else might trickle sand. 'Gold-dust,' he shouts, and it druv me pretty near weeping silly to be standing there and him pouring gold-dust away the same as it might be sand. 'For Gawd's own sake, give over, Abel,' I hollered. 'No, and I won't give over,' he hollered back. 'You can kiss Rose whenever you've a mind to,' he said, 'and I can do what I like with my gold.' 'Give over, Abel,' I hollered again, for I was always a saving man, mate, and it was more nor I could bear to see the way he was sowing the sea with gold-dust the same as anyone else might sow mustid and cress. 'It's all yours, Harry,' he hollered. And what I didn't call him you wouldn't believe. 'What d'yer mean, it's all mine, you grinning bastard, when you keep on flinging of it overboard!' 'Why,' he said, 'if you was to swear you wouldn't go aboard the ship that's standing in to take us off of this island, it's all yours, Harry, for the taking.'

"With that he left the gold and jumped into the water hisself and swum back to where I was. It come over me to knife him, and he knowed it did, too, for he said, 'I see'd it in your eye, Harry, to knife me, but what good would that do you? Leave me go aboard with Rose and you can keep the gold, and I won't speak a word of it to no man. Only, you got to tell Rose as you're done with her and give her up to me for gold.'

"And that's what I done, mate. I give her up, and I reckon the curse begun to work quicker nor what you'd think. Well, when they was gone in the *Southern Bride* and I stayed, I wish I hadn't, for with all that gold and me a saving man, I felt sick sometimes when the mud started rumbling and grumbling in the night. I got the horrors, mate, afore I'd been

long alone and I reckon there's few men as wouldn't have had the horrors on Macqueen, few men as wouldn't have been afeared of waking up in the middle of the night and being made into what my poor old mother used to call bubble-and-squeak afore morning. And when I got aboard the *Maid of Athens,* that give me the horrors. Her cargo was wheat as well as gold, and I begun to think arter a bit as the gold smelt worse nor the wheat. It come over me to shift the gold away so as it didn't stink so heavy, and day by day on fine days I moved it and buried it—well, never you mind where I buried it, mate, but wherever I done it Abel Hearne will nose it out all right, so let's get the raft afloat as quick as maybe."

"But how did you ever reach this island? You haven't told me that yet." I could have listened for hours to the tale of this strange existence.

"Why, it were this way, mate. When I'd buried the gold, it come over dark all of a sudden one morning, and the air turned thick, the same like as it was water. Only it was air, if you take my meaning. And the sea was like glass. No, and it weren't like glass neither. It were more like tin if it comes to that. And when I looked up I see'd Rose walking over the sea toward me. Though I've reckoned since as this was jest my fancy. But my stomach turned agin the sight of her sweeping the sea as tall as a ship. I were sweating inside and out I was; and there was sounds of roaring, the like of what I never heard afore nor since, and I said to myself I said, 'Harry,' I said, 'she's come for you, and blue hell 'll have your soul!' You must figure it as the earth was shaking like a pudding and all of a twitch like a animal's back and me waiting to be swallered up. But I weren't. Only I had the horrors on me again, and next day I see'd a ship, and I hailed her and was took off and put ashore in Auckland. That weren't too bad, because I'd kep'

some of the gold when I buried the rest, and what with me being a saving man and all I reckoned I'd speckylate. But the curse was on it, and I speckylated faster nor what Abel was throwing of it overboard. A few years arter that, there was a party sailed to collinize Wednesday Island and me I sailed with them, being reckoned a handy man in Auckland when I weren't speckylating.

"But when I got that near again to the gold, I begun to think I'd been a chicken-headed fool to leave it so quick. Many the times I arst myself if I'd tell the others and divide it up all square, me having two for their one. But I couldn't somehow bring myself to leave it go like that, and I speckylated to take one of the boats of a dark night and sail by the stars for Macqueen and load her up with gold and get away to Auckland as rich as Nabub. But the curse was on me, for arter I'd sighted Macqueen there come a hurricane fit to blow the sun out, and I run before it the same as if I was being chased by a pack of bloody mountains, and then I were pooped, and when I come to I was laying on this here beach like a cracked egg. Still I knowed where I was and arter a time I said to myself, 'Harry,' I said, 'you stay where you're put and you'll have the gold yet. Curses ain't everything,' I said, 'or you'd have been laying here like a dead rat in a gutter the same as Rose wished you mought.'

"It weren't too bad on this island, neither. There was goats, and I got friendly with 'em so as they'd let me suck their udders the same as if I was a kid myself. But one day I turned agin 'em with their bloody bleating, and I druv the whole blaring lot over the cliffs with fire. And when I done it, I wish I hadn't, and I'd have a game with myself sometimes and pretend as I hadn't. Yes, I'd go to think I was a goat myself, mate, when the fit was on me. And all

the time I was saving logs so as I could get away to Macqueen and see after my gold. But the logs come in very slow. Sometimes I'd get three logs in a year and sometimes on'y one, and when you took that log and which was mine and stuck it up on the hill I reckoned it was time I was off. But when I come to try and float the raft what I'd been working to make all them years, I couldn't move it a inch and me reckoned as strong as a injin in my day. But if you and your mate 'll help me, I'll see as that red-faced Abel don't get my gold, and which is mine, and who can say it ain't?"

I asked him how many years he had spent on this island.

"I don't know," he said, scratching his head with a goat's horn. "It was '89 when I left Auckland to go as handy man on Wednesday, and I were on Wednesday upward of three years and more."

"Nearly twenty years!" I exclaimed.

"Ah, I reckon it wouldn't be far short. I've saved forty logs, and the one you tried to steal—that makes forty-one."

"But surely some ships must have passed in all that time?"

"In course they passed, mate, and two on 'em stood off for a week or more. There was one party come ashore and begun nosing round and picking flowers the same as a school treat. It fair give me the itch to watch 'em. And another party come and fixed up that hut and I kep' all the tins ever since and saved 'em for my v'yage from Macqueen to Auckland when I'd got the gold aboard. But what did I keer for ships? I haven't waited all these years to go and give my gold to a pack of Dashabouts as 'ud on'y go and speckylate it all away. You help me lanch the raft, mate, and you shall have your pinch of dust. But no one else shan't. Unless it mought be that 'ar

girl Rose. I wouldn't say as I moughtn't give her a ounce jest for herself."

When I discussed with Biscoe the prospect of our all embarking on Hawkyard's raft, he was very much against it. He was convinced that the old man was crazy and that we should have no chance of doing anything but perish miserably on the sea. I told him that I had absolutely made up my mind to risk the adventure rather than stay any longer on the island; and though he tried to dissuade me I could not help perceiving that the prospect of being alone with Rose was secretly pleasant to contemplate. I promised that, if I reached the *Octoroon* safely or, in the event of her having left Macqueen Island, if I found her at Wednesday Island, I would see that he and Rose were taken off and brought safely back there for Bonney to perform the marriage service over them. This was such a welcome suggestion that Biscoe did not try any longer to oppose my setting forth, but encouraged me warmly and wished good luck to my venture.

We found that Hawkyard had amassed an extraordinary collection of stuff from the beaches all round the south of the island, which though inaccessible from above were easily gained by short swims here and there of a few yards round the projections of the cliffs. What his own jetsam did not provide, the contents of the depôt did, and we were able to fashion two or three more rough oars to match the solitary oar that had been washed up on this coast in twenty years. Rose kindly sacrificed some of her underclothing for a sail and did the necessary sewing. Biscoe produced a pocket compass, and after a few days' work we were ready to launch the raft, which by using some of the kauri logs as rollers we managed to do more easily than I expected. I noticed with interest that the old man had used the sinews of sea-birds to lash the logs

together, and I asked him where he had learnt that trick, for I was remembering those Patagonian canoes. Apparently it was his own idea, and I wondered if I should have thought of doing that. Most of the distinguished shipwrecked heroes of books have had a natural genius for boat-building. Even poor silly Ben Gunn contrived to fashion himself a coracle. I feel fairly certain that Biscoe and I by ourselves should never have succeeded in putting together any kind of a craft, even if by not doing so we had had to remain all our life marooned. However, old Hawkyard was more in the shipwreck tradition than Biscoe or myself and I considered it a great privilege to obtain at first hand a glimpse at the technique of escaping from a desert island. I calculated that with luck we should be able to progress at about a mile an hour, which would bring us to Macqueen Island in about four days. Against Biscoe's advice I took all my luggage with me, because I thought that it would form some kind of a deck, and I had no desire to spend my time sitting, lying, or standing in six inches of water. He seemed to think that I was bound to lose it; but, as I pointed out to him, I had no ambition for my luggage to survive myself, and I saw no reason why it should be lost unless I were also lost.

At last we were ready to start; and, after the exquisite meals of bully beef we had been having these days, I felt ready for anything.

"Don't forget that we're right in the middle of the hurricane season in these latitudes," Biscoe reminded me.

I said that hurricanes must conform to the laws of chance like everything else and that having been caught by one I was not likely to be caught by another yet awhile.

"It is a fallacy to speak of the laws of chance,"

Biscoe said. "You are not in the least less likely to escape a hurricane because you have already experienced one."

"Good-bye, missy," old Hawkyard said to Rose. "I'm afeerd I froughtened you when I caught you like I did and carried you off along of me to the cave. But don't take agin me for that, and you shall have a ounce of gold-dust, missy. But mind, don't speckylate it. Be saving and you'll be happy."

It was six o'clock of a calm morning when we left Goat Island in our cumbersome craft, and setting a course due east we must have been fifteen miles away by nightfall.

CHAPTER XIX

MACQUEEN ISLAND

WHEN I look back at that hazardous voyage with Harry Hawkyard, I marvel at my self-confidence. We may be right to scoff at the cowardice and superstition of those who believe in the potency of curses; but the old man's history as I had heard it might have made the least imaginative person pause before he linked his fortune with that of one whose evil choice of many years ago was not yet expiated. Since I had met him, my curiosity about the motives behind the Settlement had been almost assuaged; and I really believe that it was my dislike of living at such close quarters with an engaged couple more than anything else which led me to involve myself in this new and probably dangerous adventure. Yet I cannot pretend that I felt any foreboding of dreadful events about to befall us. On the contrary, while we were rowing away in gondolier fashion across the light-blue sea, my spirits were tranquil and sometimes even jubilant, with a kind of merry complacency like the humming of a top, the result of steady and not too tiring rhythmical exercise.

I had been afraid that my companion would become ungovernably agitated when he was drawing near to his treasure; but I suppose that the benign influence of space and the lulling motion of the water after all those years of a solitary and restricted existence on Goat Island had charmed his hungry soul to a brief contentment. It was only when Macqueen appeared upon the horizon that his lust for the gold

betrayed itself. During the earlier half of the voyage he was just an amusing and harmless companion. He derived much pleasure from looking at himself in a small hand-glass which Rose had presented to him as a token of her forgiveness. On my suggestion, and not with the best of grace, Biscoe had given him his sky-blue ratteen suit, which the old man had coveted from the first moment he had seen Biscoe wearing it. It certainly became him a great deal better than its original owner.

"I aged a lot," he told me after he had been scrutinizing his countenance for nearly half an hour with the closest attention. "Yes, I reckon I aged a lot since I were cast away. And my face looks kind of greenish, mate, which weren't its color in old days. I weren't never a red-faced man like Abel was, but I were never greenish the same as I am now. I don't know whether it mought come from washing my face in rock-pools. Though I never washed myself enough, not to hurt. Not more nor two or three times a year, if that, and I wouldn't go for to say as a few sprinklings out of rock-pools would turn a man's face green. Or it mought have been the goat-skins I was always wearing, seeing as how goats is grass-eating animals. Or it mought have been the sulphur what I drunk on Macqueen and which has been coming out of me all the years I been living cast away. Yes, I aged a lot, there's no mistake; but, —— me, if ever I saw a man turn green like what I have."

"Did you ever long violently for bread all these years?" I asked, thinking of myself and of how much I longed for bread at this moment.

"No, I can't say as I ever longed for bread, mate."

"Or cheese?" I asked, thinking of Ben Gunn.

"No, I never could abide cheese. Cheese always put me in mind of corpses. I always had too proud a nose for cheese."

"Nor tobacco?"

"No, I was never one for smoking or chewing. I was always a saving man, and I never drunk or smoked. Abel, he was the one for booze. I reckon when he sees me step ashore on Macqueen he'll think he's got the rats, Abel will. Especially me being so green in the face as what I am."

I made up my mind to raise a question which had not yet been discussed.

"You know that Abel's got his son with him?" I asked.

"No, and I didn't know that," the old man said sharply. "How in —— was I to know that?"

"And his son is a sea-captain," I went on.

"Done well for hisself, has he? Well, some does do well for theirselves."

"And his name is Harry Hawkyard Hearne."

The old man lowered one of his eyelids (they resembled barnacles) in a long wink.

"Then I reckon he ain't Abel's son at all," he chuckled. "I reckon he's my son, because Rose when she went away with Abel were five months gone."

I told him that I had thought the very same thing; even before I knew any details of the circumstances in which the bargain between himself and Abel was made.

"And what kind of a fellow would this be?"

"Why, a well set-up man, cautious, determined, perhaps rather cruel, certainly unscrupulous, and strong, very strong."

"Well, I were always reckoned strong. Strong as a injin I were reckoned."

I reminded him that I had already had a taste of his strength.

"But what I'm getting at is this," I went on. "From what I can make out, it isn't Abel who's after your gold. It's your own son who wants it. And I've been

wondering if perhaps you wouldn't be glad to let your son have it."

"Let my son have it?" he repeated indignantly. "You don't think I been through what I have to let a bloody son go and speckylate it all away? Besides, when I give up Rose I give up my son and all. What would I do with a son now? He'd be too big to thrash. That's a nice thing, to go palming off a son on me at my age."

I tried to argue with him that the only chance of happiness for him in the future lay in restoring to the son the gold for which he had sold the mother. You may be sure that I was not in the least anxious to secure any material benefits for Captain Hearne; but I fancy that I did feel some superstitious disquiet over the curse, and I did hope that even thus late in their stormy lives these two old men of the sea might be reconciled and pass out of this world in amity. My attempt to direct his course was wasted breath. The lust of gold was still too urgent in Hawkyard's heart, and I who knew how urgently it gnawed the heart of his son dreaded what blood and violence might betide from their meeting. I did make one more effort to avert this by trying to bring before old Hawkyard the imprudence of aiming at all and thereby perhaps gaining nothing.

"What are you going to do when we reach Macqueen?" I asked. "You must remember that your son has a ship and that he is surrounded by a disciplined crew which will obey his orders. You won't stand a chance of carrying off your gold in the face of them all."

The old man pointed to the horizon for answer; and when I beheld Macqueen Island looming thirty miles away I knew that I was beaten. The blessed calm that had been shed upon his spirit by water and by space vanished, supplanted by a fever and

fury of greed, so that when he bent low to his oar he seemed to be actually raking his treasure up from the very bed of the deep.

"There she lays, mate, there she lays!" he cried. "I seen her like that in my sleep all the years I been away from her. And the gold sprinkled upon her like snow. See how she glitters, mate! Bend down to it! Drive your oar, mate! Bend down to it!"

An hour later we found that the water round our track was covered with floating lumps of pumice that were being vomited up evidently from some terrific depth, for the surface of the ocean was smooth as oil. We rowed on, and presently the dead bodies of deep-sea fish — white hideous shapes with eyes like targets and gaping dragons' mouths — were mingled with the pumice.

"Bend down to it, mate!" the old man cried.

It was dark before we passed over the area of this submarine eruption; and all that night I was expecting to see flames shoot up through the sea.

When we approached Macqueen Island toward late afternoon of the next day I looked in vain for any sign of the *Octoroon,* and I thought with repulsion of treading its hot sulphurous mud. Those black and savage cliffs filled me with dread. I could well understand what dark passions that desolate plutonian spot had kindled in the hearts of those who had been doomed to languish upon its barren shores. I could detect nowhere a trace of greenery, even upon the forbidding high land above the cliffs, which from the raft appeared to be nothing but a scoriac heap over which plunged black petrified torrents of lava.

"Hadn't we better stand off till morning?" I suggested. "It's already late to be looking for a landing-place."

"Bend down to it, mate!" he cried for answer. "We must get around to the nor'rard."

We toiled on past those infernal battlements that here and there shone in the westering sun with the luster of blacking. When we rounded the northwest promontory of the island I saw a couple of beaches. Beyond these a chasm like the half of a gigantic chimney split the cliffs asunder, from every fissure of which vapors were pouring unceasingly.

"It were in there that the *Maid of Athens* come ashore. She struck on that rock, about half a cable's length out, and then she were carried off again by the seas and druv in there."

"In there?" I echoed. "But that's the crater of an active volcano, or at any rate a solfatara."

"It mought be," said the old man. "It were bloody hot walking for the feet, as I told you."

"There's no sign of the *Octoroon,*" I said. "They must have given up the search for your gold."

"They mought have," said the old man, whose fever had now given place to a horrible equanimity.

"Put me ashore, mate, where the sea breaks gentle in the lee of that low bit of a island to starboard."

He pointed to an islet that rose about ten feet above the level of the water, and might have been about forty yards long and perhaps twenty broad.

"Put you ashore?" I repeated. "But where am I to go?"

"Not here, mate, not here," he muttered, giving me a somber and ill-minded glance that seemed to hold in its depths the shadow of those cliffs that cast their dark reflection upon the gray evening sea.

I thought what a foolish thing I had done to steer my course to this execrable island. Had I used as much energy to travel northeast instead of east, I should by now be off Wednesday and not within range of a volcano with a madman for company. I could not imagine now why I should have felt so certain of finding the *Octoroon* still here. I might have guessed

that, as soon as the gold was not found in the hulk of the *Maid of Athens,* the yacht would sail away. It would have been assumed that Hawkyard had somehow managed to convey the treasure to Auckland, and they were not likely to waste time searching for it elsewhere.

"It would be best to keep clear of this place till to-morrow morning," I insisted. "You'll find no gold to-night, and I don't relish the notion of camping out on a live volcano."

As if to mark its approbation of my respectful attitude a rumbling like remote thunder was heard from the bowels of that hellish chasm, and a jet of boiling water spouted from the further beach a hundred feet into the air.

"That's nothing," said old Hawkyard contemptuously, "We used to hear sich noises all the time, mate."

"But it gave you the horrors in the end," I reminded him.

"Put me ashore, put me ashore," was all he would mutter for answer.

I was determined not to land, although I was afraid that I should find it hard to reach Wednesday Island by myself. The departure of the *Octoroon* had upset all my plans. Even if this madman found his gold, what would he do with it all by himself on this island? Something made me turn my head at this moment, and I caught him testing the sharpness of a knife on his palm. I divined that, as soon as he was certain of getting comfortably ashore with my help, he meant to put an end to me and any claims I might have on that pinch of gold-dust. The infatuated old madman was planning to load his clumsy raft with the gold and get to Auckland. He had put the knife away the instant he saw me turn my head, and I still had a short time to decide upon my procedure. If I refused to help him beach the raft, he would attack me at

once; and knowing his strength, I had not much confidence in coming successfully out of a struggle. I might dodge him when we landed; but what would be my future on this abandoned spot with a maniac and that devilish volcano? Then I suddenly remembered that I had a revolver. I was just making up my mind to shoot Hawkyard in cold blood before he made an attempt to knife me, when my heart came into my mouth with stark terror, for as we rounded the point of the islet in the lee of which we were to make the shore, the apparition of a Titanic woman wreathed in smoke came treading the silvery water and seeming to refuse us leave to pass.

"Rose!" the old man raved. "I will have my gold! You never froughtened me yet, you bitch!"

With this he leapt into the water and swam toward the islet; but when he tried to clamber up the side he shrieked, and I saw that steam was issuing wherever he touched its soil. Nevertheless he managed somehow to land, and kneeling down he began to grub up the ground in a fury of haste.

"You won't keep me from my gold by setting it afire!" he cried. "Blue hell may have you and me together, but I'll have my gold!"

He shoveled aside the sulphurous ashes with his hands faster and faster, and delved elbow-deep into the seething stew of mud; but the agony of heat baffled after a time even his determination to disinter the gold he had buried on this islet before it came to be the crucible it now was.

"Rose, you done me!" he shrieked; and as the words were on his blistered lips a boiling jet burst with a roar beneath his very feet in a fountain of steam that left him limp and prone upon the writhing mud, scalded, instantaneously I prayed, to death.

Horrified by the catastrophe which had overtaken Hawkyard I made a desperate effort to get the raft

away from these accursed waters round Macqueen. But once more the apparition of that Titanic woman glowing now with dull fires in the falling gloom rose from the glimmering and somber water to forbid my progress; and it was only very gradually borne in upon my distracted senses that this spectral shape of womanhood was the smoldering figurehead of the *Octoroon* kept upright in the water by what timbers of the yacht still adhered to her. Before my nerves had been readjusted by this natural explanation of the apparition they received another shock, when I felt my oar grabbed and perceived a dim and dripping creature raise itself from the water and climb aboard the raft.

"Don't shoot, mister. It's only old Abel Hearne meaning no offense and I hope none's taken."

Although he was a principal in the drama of Macqueen Island, there was a genial sanity about this other old man of the sea that went far to restore my shattered nerves. I liked the way he took an oar without a moment's hesitation and asked what course I meant to steer.

"We had better try to make Wednesday Island," I said.

"Nor'west," he said, "with a breath more west in it than north. Oh, you've got a compass? Ah, well, that's easy sailing."

"Let's get away from this place as quickly as possible."

"Nobody more willing than me," he answered.

We rowed in silence for some time, and at last he said:

"Weren't that Harry's voice I heard just afore I came aboard? He was took by one of the Jeeserses, weren't he?"

I gave him an account of my adventures since I was put ashore on Goat Island, to which he listened in

silence, nodding occasionally when he recognized some authentic touch of old Hawkyard.

"I reckoned all the time he'd be alive," he commented at the close of my tale. "I said so to Harry and I said so to Harper. I said so afore ever we left London. Have you got any baccy, mister?"

"Only cigarettes."

"Ciggyrettes! O dear! O dear! That's like when I once asked for rum and they give me clarrick, which was all they had. 'Whatever on earth's this?' I said to the tow-headed young Touchmenot as was serving out the booze. 'It's clarrick,' she says very stiff and haughty. 'Oh, it's clarrick, is it?' I says. 'Well, your hair wants washing more than what mine does, Gladys,' I says, and she turned round as uppish as if she was in a post-office and says: 'Hennythink else? Perraps you'd like shampain?' 'No, and I wouldn't, you silly little tart,' I says, 'nor sham pleasure either. What I wants is rum!' 'Well, this ain't a common bar,' she says. 'We don't serve volgar drinks like that.' Well, after that there was only one thing I could say, so I said it to myself and come out. Ciggyrettes! Oh dear! Oh dear! I wouldn't say as you wouldn't get more taste out of smoking the match. I did once have a try at chewing ciggyrettes, but I reckon I might as well have started in chewing curl-papers."

However, I persuaded him to accept half a dozen cigarettes, and he chewed them meditatively. I did not interrupt his thoughts with questions. I wanted the account I had given him of Hawkyard to be the key that would loosen his tongue as when we first met it had been loosened by whisky. Thus in silence we rowed on, helped by a soldier's wind from the south-east against which not even our clumsy craft could rebel.

"So Harry reckoned as Rose done him at the last?" the old man said after an hour of silence. "When I

heard him holler that out just before the Jeeser took him, it put me in mind of a mort of things as is dead and gone these thirty years. She never forgive him, Rose didn't. Even at the last, when I was sitting by her bed and she breathing very fast and heavy like as if she was getting up steam to puff out of this world into the next, she never forgive him. There's some women take up with God and all that when the end's in sight. But not Rose. I sounded the hooter for a sky-pilot, and he come aboard about three bells in the first dog-watch, and being a bit down-hearted I'd had shrimps for my tea and when the sky-pilot come alongside I was just going round the corner to have one, because my throat was a bit salted up what with the shrimps and a nasty lump there as I couldn't get rid of somehow through me thinking Rose was flying the Blue Peter and might sail almost at any moment when the tide suited. 'I've come to see Mrs. Hearne by request,' says the Holy Joe. 'That's right, mister,' says I. 'But steer her gently,' I says to him. 'She's a craft as always wanted very careful handling.' So the pilot goes up on the bridge, but when Rose saw him, she sung out, 'Abel, there's cockroaches in this cabin, and if I've told you so once I've told you so twenty times.'

"Well, of course, I knew from that Rose weren't going to have the Holy Joe, and so I took him outside and said I was very sorry but it wasn't any manner of use him trying to do anything until the funeral. He took it very well, the Holy Joe did, said as how people had queer fancies when they was near death and nobody least of all the Loving Savior was going to think any the worse on them for that. So I went back and sat by the bed and listened to her breathing. 'Abel,' she says very faint, 'I don't reckon Harry's dead,' she says, 'and if there's a hell,' she says, 'I'll be waiting for him there.' I daresay I must have looked a bit

old-fashioned when she called him 'Harry' like that, because mostly she called him 'old Harry' to make the difference with young Harry, which was her son and second mate of the *Indian Chief* outward bound to Batavia when she was dying. 'Don't let it fret you, Abel,' she says, putting out her hand so as I could take it. 'You've been a good husband to me,' she says; 'even when you was in liquor you was always a man anyone could look up to,' she says. 'So if I'm thinking of Harry at the last, you'll have to forgive me.' 'Of course I forgive you, Rose,' I says, and you couldn't have drawn that lump in my throat not with a corkscrew, it was that big by now. And I remembered what the Holy Joe said about dying folks having queer fancies, and I weren't going to let the Loving Savior nor anyone else take the wind out of my sails, so far as forgiving Rose went.

"Then she were quiet for a bit. Only breathing very heavy. But after a bit she begun to talk again and she said, 'You never ought to have done it, Abel. You never ought to have tempted him with the gold. And you didn't do yourself no good, because I always been his and I never been yours.' 'But you never hated me, did you, Rose?' I asked. 'No, I never hated you, Abel. You just weren't there.' Well, I reckoned she was speaking straight now, and it took me a bit hard, mister. When we was first married, I used to ask her sometimes if she loved me when I were holding of her tight in my arms. 'Do you love me, Rosebud?' I used to say, me being young then and thinking 'Rosebud' sounded daintier than what Rose did. But I'd notice whenever I asked her this she'd turn away her head and tell me not to be so soft. And though I was always a drinking man, I reckon I used to drink a bit more on account of her being always a bit off-handed with me, because when I was a sheet in the wind I used to kid myself she were more loving

than what she was. But when she told me straight I never wasn't there, it took me a bit hard. I didn't reckon as that was a dying fancy. I reckoned as that was the plain truth, and it took me a bit hard, mister. I jest sat back in my chair and blinked at the knobs of the bed. Only I kep' hold of her hand, and she didn't go for to take it away, and so I started in to stroke it, and still she never drawed it away the same as she usually did, and I thought to myself she was softening at the last; but when the girl come in with the lamp I saw she was dead."

I was too deeply moved by this tale of thwarted lives to speak, and we rowed on in silence until the old man began again:

"Of course, I see now where I made my mistake. I reckoned when Harry sold her to me, as you might call it, Rose would turn against him and take up with me properly. And then I made another mistake over young Harry. Through him not being my son and Rose and me never having children of our own, I reckoned to please her by being extra fond of young Harry so as to show I weren't jealous of what had been and wasn't any more. So what with his own nature and me spiling him, young Harry grew up headstrong; and when my old father died and left me his barque, the *Able and Willing,* I did well and Harry was given a good eddication, better than I ever had myself. But he was always headstrong, and they tell me he was a terror to knock poor seamen about in ships where he was mate. Still, he done well for hisself. And when I lost my own ship through me being drunk, I come on young Harry for my keep, because I never saved nothing all my life. Only a fourpenny bit once when I were a nipper to buy myself a top. And when I was going to buy the top I left it fall down a gutter and that give me a sickener of saving for good and all.

"Well, as I was saying, I come on young Harry for my keep, and he got so as he used to grudge me the price of a quartern of rum. One day when he was asking what I did with the half-crown he give me last week I told him he could have all the money he liked if he'd go and fetch it. 'What d'you mean, you silly old tank?' he asked. Because Harry had got so as he'd call me names like that in front of anyone, almost, and it used to make me feel kind of set down when he did. So I told him about the *Maid of Athens* and the gold that might be in her for the taking. I'd heard after Rose and me reached Sydney as it was reckoned sixty thousand ounces of gold was lost when she went down. I told Harry I'd seen the gold with my own eyes. Only I never told him about Harry Hawkyard and the way his mother married me. Well, after that there was no rest for Harry till he could get to Macqueen and see if the gold was still there. He asked me what for I wanted to lose my ship, because if I hadn't we could have sailed in the poor old *Able and Willing* and been rich as Creases all our lives. 'Yes,' I said, 'and when you'd got the gold, where would I be? Why, cadging the price of a quartern of rum, the same as I am now.'

"But Harry couldn't sleep for thinking of all the gold waiting to be took if he only had a ship of his own. He made me swear I wouldn't tell nobody what I'd told him, and that give me a bit of a handle over him which I was glad of, and I drunk more rum those days than I drunk ever since I lost my ship. It must have been two years while Harry was turning round to see how he was to get that gold. He didn't want to float a company, because he thought he'd have to pay too much out to others if he did. And he never liked paying out, Harry didn't.

"Well, so it went on, until one day he met Harper, and Harper begun talking about Wednesday Island

and how he'd been in Auckland when the settlers was taken off by a New Bedford whaler because the volcano had been spouting up fire and frightened them fit to die of it. Harper said they was shaking when he saw them come ashore at Auckland and he reckoned they wouldn't want to go near Wednesday Island not for a long time to come. He put it to Harry why couldn't they kid a lot of mugs to come and form a South Seas Settlement, and Harry thought it over a bit and said why couldn't they go treasure-hunting, too. Harper said he was a man after his own heart, and I never saw two men take to one another more nor what those two did. Then they brought in that Collins to see if he couldn't get a ship for them, and he managed it somehow. But I never rightly knew just how they were going to divide with him.

"I was getting a bit worried by now, because I'd sworn to Harry Hawkyard I'd never tell no man about the gold, and I reckoned he was still alive. So then I told Harry about him. Only I never told Harry he was his own father. But young Harry he only laughed and said if he had any lip from the likes of him he'd push him down the volcano. They used to joke about the volcano; but when it come to it, it weren't no joking matter for them.

"I never reckoned I'd have to go with them. But they were afraid I'd start talking in London. Besides, they thought if I went there'd be no mistake. But Harry was always afraid of me talking, and that's why I was kep' under hatches nearly all the v'yage. The funny thing was Harper he was always afraid of you, mister. He said you was the nosiest —— he'd ever laid eyes on, and from the first moment he saw you he said he was sure you'd be a Jonah to them all. That's why they didn't go to Valparaiso, because they thought you was going to create over them collaring all the old woman's joolery. It was Harper as done in

that young fellow who drank so hearty and who I liked, because I'd let on to him where we was going; and when the old lady threw herself overboard they found she had a lot of joolery in her trunk. Of course, they was always frightened that when they come to Wednesday Island they'd find the other settlers come back already, and if they had they was going to land the whole lot on Goat Island. I reckon old Harry Hawkyard wouldn't half have started bleating then. Well, he's gone now, Harry is. And the gold's gone. And they're all gone except me."

He fell into a broody silence and chewed another half dozen cigarettes before he spoke again.

"Yes, when it come to it, the volcano wasn't much of a joke for them. That it wasn't. There lay the old *Maid of Athens* wedged in like she used to be, but where I used to swim across to her on fine days was b'iling hot now, and the poor bloody Lascar that was flung overboard to carry a cable from the *Octoroon* to the *Maid of Athens* squealed like a lobster when he touched the water. But Harry weren't going to be done that way. He said b'iling water wouldn't hurt the *Octoroon*. Only clean her bottom the same as he'd see it done many a time off Santorin in the Greek Islands where the sea b'iles the same as it was b'iling here. So he warped her in till you could jump aboard the *Maid of Athens* as easy as laugh. I told him if it come on to blow, she'd be broke in pieces. And she would have been. But it come on worse nor blowing; for a wave rose up out of the sea all of a sudden and come down on them from above, and fire come from underneath, and there was nothing left of the ship nor the crew what sailed her nor Harry nor Harper nor any of them. Only that poor old figurehead which has been bobbing about in the water for a fortnight and more, sometimes flar-

ing up quite bright and then going down to a kind of smolder where the fire's eating into her."

"But how did you escape from this horrible disaster?"

"Why, I'd gone ashore and climbed up to the top of the island, the same as I used when Rose and Harry were kissing each other down on the beach. And I was walking about and thinking of things dead and gone these thirty years and more, and wondering where old Harry was, and if Rose could see me where she was now. And I was looking out to sea and thinking they was lucky to have it so smooth, and then all of a sudden it seemed to arch its back the same as a tomcat does, and I run to the other side of the island because I couldn't bear to see it break. And it was lucky I did, because I got a nice lee when the volcano started in sicking up red-hot pitch and all. I stayed over the other side for a week or more until it was quiet, and I said to myself I was never born to die on Macqueen. I saw you come around in the raft, and I said to myself, 'That's Harry Hawkyard come for his gold.' And I was right. Only Rose done him in the end, and he knowed she done him, too, Harry did. And now, I reckon, if you'll take the first watch, mister, I'll lay down and have a bit of a sleep, for I haven't slep' much these last nights, wondering all the time if I was going to be took. But I reckon Rose won't want me, now she's got Harry. And I reckon when I get back I'll turn religious so as I get a clearance for heaven and keep out of their way. Yes, I reckon she'll be happier in hell with him than what she would be walking about heaven in her Sunday best arm-in-arm with me."

CHAPTER XX

ROMANTIC GRATIFICATION

WE kept watch and watch all through that night. So friendly was the wind and so strenuously did we try to put Macqueen astern forever that by afternoon of the next day the island was barely visible.

"And a good job, too," said Abel, "for it were nothing but a dirty old saucepan of mischief in a manner of speaking. Why, hullo, there's a ship on the port bow! A steamer, too, and coming our way!"

Involuntarily I snatched up my green-lined umbrella and waved to the oncoming vessel as if it were an omnibus that I were hailing from the curb.

"She won't see that gingham of yours, mister. And don't get jumping around too hearty. You'll be overboard in a minute. Lay to with your oar, and she won't pass us by."

Soon after this the steamer must have sighted the raft, for she altered her course, slowed down her engines, and lowered a boat.

The first thing I heard when I reached the deck of the *Maori Queen* was the voice of Hunt.

"By the living Jingo, it *is* Mr. Marsham! I said when I saw the raft, 'By Jove, I know the cut of that tussore. That's one of Hunt and Hibben's suits,' I said, 'or I'll be absolutely jiggered!' By Jove, sir, we've had some adventures since we parted that night. The lake in the old crater began to boil at the very moment when I was going to have my morning dip."

"Oh, it was topping, Mr. Marsham," Prudence

cried. "Because the fire came right up through the water and burnt the trees most frightfully."

"I had a narrow squeak, Marsham," said Newton. "I give you my word I raced a stream of red-hot lava for six miles down one of the valleys. It was so close to me once that it burnt the seat out of my best pants. I had thought of taking to the water, but it was lucky I didn't and doubled back up the next valley instead, for I give you my word that the very sea boiled, and I was able to go down during a temporary lull, cut off a piece of stewed shark, and eat it! Jolly tasty it was, too!"

How commonplace my own adventures were beginning to seem, how dull and not worth repeating my own diet of limpets. I think that this must have been the moment when the idea of writing a book about the whole business was begotten. Even when I did begin to talk about myself a little, it was clear that everybody took much more interest in the fact of Rose and Biscoe being still marooned on Goat Island. I never heard such a babble as when the captain of the *Maori Queen* was approached with a request that he should steam at once to their rescue. Of course, there is no doubt that respectability is esteemed above life and death by English people. Apart from the murders committed by insurance-agents, who seem to take up murder as a profitable side-line to their ordinary traffic in the prospects of mortality, nearly all the chief murders are committed with respectability as the object to be achieved. Nobody cared a bit that Rose and Biscoe might be dying of indigestion at this moment from a surfeit of limpets. Their characters were at stake; what did the strain upon the pancreas matter?

When each settler had individually narrated to me his own experience of the eruption which had driven them all off the island, I was able to get a general

view of what had happened and why I had found them on board the *Maori Queen* bound for Auckland.

Apparently everything had gone well at first with the settlement; although I gathered that it had been taken rather in the spirit of a camping-out holiday, the novelty of which was already beginning to wear off, I fancy, when the eruption took place. This evidently had been quite a formidable affair, and they were all most thankful when the *Maori Queen* steamed into the bay, bringing back with her the original settlers who had been driven away by another eruption eighteen months ago. I had a talk with the patriarch of the real settlers, a burly and intelligent man called Baynes, who was determined to go back later on when the volcanic activity in this part of the world had settled down. He told me that the periods of extreme activity seemed to recur in cycles and to last about three or four years. He said that for himself he would have been glad to stay; but I gathered that his womenfolk did not relish the prospect. As a young man, he remembered old Hawkyard in Auckland; but when Hawkyard was employed on Wednesday, he had not yet stepped into the shoes of a previous family of settlers, also frightened away by tremors and portents. Baynes had behaved very decently over the invasion of his property by the Octoroons. He remembered meeting Harper, knew him well by reputation, and thought no end was too bad for him.

By the way, the eruption caused my ex-valet to forswear Nature worship, and I had not been aboard the *Maori Queen* ten minutes when he came up to greet me, dressed in what I am pretty sure was one of Biscoe's old suits. Anyway, he was all in black, and informed me he was going to Auckland to try to be admitted to the ministry of the Seventh Day Adventists, because he had been converted by the eruption and devoutly believed that the Last Day was at

hand. Bonney had wrestled with him in the hope of securing him for Anglicanism, but without success. In fact, poor Bonney confided to me that the whole adventure from his point of view had been a complete fiasco. Not only had he failed to secure Andersen's soul at a favorable moment of spiritual crisis, but Winifred had, with the approval of his wife and sister-in-law, asked to be relieved from her vow of celibacy in order to marry Dick Duffy. He had told her that she could do nothing about it until she saw a bishop, whereupon she had announced her firm intention of living in what Bonney described as "concubinage" with Dick Duffy if he refused to marry them. Pressure was brought to bear upon him from all sides, and at last under protest he had performed the marriage ceremony.

"And now," he went on, "as if that were not enough, we have this terrible business of Rose and Biscoe all alone together on a desert island."

"Never mind. You'll be able to marry them as soon as they are rescued."

"Oh, of course, they must be married instantly," he agreed. "But it's all very difficult without proper registers or anything."

However, poor Bonney was to have his reward presently, for when we reached Goat Island and took off Rose and Biscoe, old Abel Hearne came to me and said:

"I'd take it kindly, mister, if you could have me put ashore on that island so as I could stay there and just drop astern quiet like when the time comes. If I gets back to England, I shall only start in cadging for quarterns of rum and be a burden and a misery to all and sundry. I been having a bit of a yarn with the Holy Joe we've got aboard, and he's laid me a course for Kingdom Come and reckons I'll catch the trades all the way if I steer all according. I like the looks

of that island, mister. I reckon that's a pretty port for anyone, but specially for me. Mostly I thinks about Rose when I'm by myself, and I reckon I could think about her beautiful on that island. And another thing, it puts me in mind of the green cliffs Brixham way, when I was a nipper. I reckon walking about that there grass I shan't never be too lonesome. I reckon I'll be seeing old playmates dead and gone, and out at sea I'll be fancying old ships I see'd as a boy coming into harbor on the flood, and if you'd say a word for me with the captain, mister, I'd be glad to be put ashore."

The old man's wish was granted. He was given a good store of provisions, a tent so that he could live away from the beach, various tools, and by Mr. Baynes four goats which he had been bringing to Wednesday Island. As soon as I was certain that he would not be compelled to live on limpets, I gave my heartiest support to the plan; and I believe that, when the old man waved us good-by from the top of Crater Hill, he was as near to happiness as he had ever been in his life.

"That old man has a real vocation for the hermitage," said Bonney to me. "He is a natural solitary. I've had a long talk with him, and my candid opinion is that he will attain great spiritual heights if Almighty God grants him His grace and time to repent. I feel that my voyage has not been wasted, and that the Lord has repaid me out of His endless bounty for Winifred's sad relapse and for Andersen's heretical, perilous, obstinate, corrupt, and presumptuous eschatology."

Biscoe's pleasure in receiving our congratulations was marred by his disappointment at missing the eruption; and he was taken aback by finding that he was to be denied the primitive and happy existence he had planned for Rose and himself on Wednesday Island.

"Though I cannot get any accurate information about the place from these people," he complained to me, "from what I can gather, young George Cosway found a fossil *kukororoa* embedded in the pumice. It seems most improbable, but if it's true it might alter all one's theories about the age of these islands, for one scarcely ever finds fossils so near volcanic rents."

"What is a *kukororoa,* Biscoe?" I asked humbly.

"The great mussel of New Zealand."

"He didn't find any fossilized limpets, did he? The *yi-yi-oh-oo-er* variety we found on Goat Island would survive any volcanic rent. I haven't digested mine yet."

"It's not a joking matter at all," Biscoe said. "I can't think why that idiotic boy didn't remember to bring it with him. And I can't arrive at any facts about the vegetation. Even Mr. Baynes, who lived there for ten years, can tell me practically nothing, though I should fancy from his description that the prevailing forest was *metrosideros polymorpha,* and I assume that the grove of palms would be a variety of *kentia,* though which one, of course, it's impossible to say. *Baueri* perhaps."

"Never mind, Biscoe. You're going to marry Rose when we get to Auckland. She's a perfect Flora in herself."

We all went to the wedding, and the bridegroom, who was still jealous of not having seen anything except an extinct volcano, took the bride to spend their honeymoon among the geysers of Rotorua. He made friends with Mr. Baynes; and when we said good-by to each other he told me that he and Rose and Dick Duffy and Winifred were going to join the settlement on Wednesday Island as soon as this period of volcanic activity was over.

We had a general meeting about the steps to be taken to recover our money from Collins, which in-

cidentally I may mention we succeeded in doing, at the expense of Lloyds I assume. After this the party broke up. The Bonneys decided to travel back to England by Sydney and Colombo, and it was sad to bid Miss Titchener farewell.

"What an adventure it has been, Mr. Marsham! Dear me, what a lot we shall have to tell to all our friends at home! The eruption, and the fright I had when I saw poor Andersen—I suppose I ought to call him Mr. Andersen now—basking in a tree-fern, such a beautiful plant, and quite . . . yes, I think that frightened me almost more than anything. Good-by!"

Andersen was firm in his determination to be a missionary of Seventh Day Adventism, and he wrote to me a year later to say that he was being sent to Pitcairn. I hoped very much that he would revert when he arrived, and carry his flock with him. It depressed me to think that the descendants of mutineers should know the exact minute of the Second Coming and the very note of the Last Trump, and be preparing for the Day of Judgment by worshiping Saturday.

Miss Ovenden and Miss Arnhoe went to stay with an old friend of one of them at Christchurch, where the Great Book, as it was called, was to be "roughed out." As far as I remember, it was called *Adam's Apple,* and it had a scandalous success a year later. Perhaps Biscoe and Rose did behave like that when I left them together on Goat Island; but I cannot bring myself to believe that they really did. I complained to my circulating library about it and was assured that the volume was only given to unmarried girls if they asked for it specially.

Newton announced that he was going to look for black opals in Queensland. Hunt, Cosway, George, Prudence, Jauncey, and myself traveled back by Rarotonga, Tahiti, and San Francisco. And a very delightful trip we had. Jauncey had been much cheered up

to hear of Captain Hearne's fate. In fact he reached England without a trace of melancholia and, so far as we could judge, without the least idea that he had ever been in the Royal Horse Guards. Cosway married again about six months after he returned to England, and the children went quietly back to school.

I was not privileged to see the actual meeting between Hunt and Hibben; but two days after I was back in Cowley Street I went along to Savile Row to look at some patterns for spring clothes.

"By Jove, sir, you're looking grand!" Hibben exclaimed. "You are indeed, sir. I was saying to Mr. Hunt only five minutes ago, 'I do hope Mr. Marsham will look in and give me an opportunity to congratulate him on his lucky escape from those savages.' Mr. Hunt has told me all about it, sir. He has, indeed. You must have a wonderfully cool head, sir. Let me see, sir, I don't quite remember if Mr. Hunt said you shot six and brained one or shot one and brained six? And you're looking slimmer, sir. You are, sir, upon my word—one moment, sir, please!" Hibben rapidly slipped his measure round my waist. "Mr. Hunt," he cried, "Mr. Marsham has lost an inch and a half!"

"You have, sir?" said Hunt, appearing from the inner shop. "We'd better go right through Mr. Marsham's measurements from top to toe, Mr. Hibben. Now, sir, what can we show you? I see you've got your eye on that gray vicuña, sir. You couldn't do better. Mr. Marsham couldn't do better, could he, Mr. Hibben? That will make up beautifully, sir. It will be quiet but dominating. Yes, sir, a suit of that gray vicuña will have the real London note. There is nothing impulsive about that gray vicuña."

That morning I visited my club for the first time since I was back in town. In the lobby I ran into X——.

"By Jove, it's Marsham! I haven't seen you for ages. Come and dine with me to-night. . . ."

"I don't think I can manage to-night, X——, thanks very much. I've been away and . . ."

"Well, what about to-morrow?"

"Why, to-morrow I'm . . ."

"Then Saturday?"

"I shall be away for the week-end in Surrey."

"Then next Monday?"

"All right, X——, I'll come to-night. Thanks very much."

And I realized that I had spent much money, that I had encountered a cyclone and shot a savage, that I had nearly been murdered and actually had been marooned, that I had only by great good fortune escaped being overwhelmed by an earthquake wave and destroyed by a volcanic eruption, that I had eaten limpets and listened to Newton's stories, that I had met Miss Ovenden and weathered the Roaring Forties, rather than accept an invitation to dine with X—— nine months ago. Would it not be simpler to get it over quickly and dine with him to-night?

"Well, this is really most jolly," he said to me that evening at the Junior Universities. "Now what are you going to drink? Do you like Burgundy?"

"No, thanks, X——," I said hurriedly. "Burgundy is too heating for me. I'd rather drink Claret."

THE END

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